

# BOLIVAR BROWN



BIDE DUDLEY





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**BOLIVAR BROWN**















[See p. 135  
"GOOD MORNIN', MISS CHASE," HE SAID. "WE GOT SOMETHIN'  
TO 'XPLAIN TO YOU"



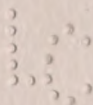
# BOLIVAR



# BROWN

By  
BIDE DUDLEY

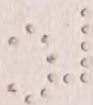
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# BOLIVAR BROWN

## I

“O’ COURSE it could ‘a’ been Bolivar Brown, but it prob’ly wusn’t. That boy has been ‘cused of swipin’ ‘nough chickens to feed a whole Methodis’ Conference, but nobody absolutely knowed he ever took one, an’ I’m sure he never did. Bol Brown ain’t a thief. He’s jest a good-natured scamp that ‘ll bear watchin’. If he don’t get no worse, an’ I don’t think he will, he’s out to land in the White House some day.”

Uncle Ezra Fox was speaking. Hezekiah Pickwick, keeper of the larger of the two general stores in Paw-Paw Corner, had been bemoaning the loss of a spring chicken which had been in a coop just outside the



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door. Somebody in the store had suggested that possibly Bolivar Brown had taken it as a foundation for a meal at the cave his chums and he had on the river bank. Uncle Ezra had taken up Bolivar's defense immediately. He was very fond of the boy.

"You see," the old man went on, "Bol Brown is a real boy. Nothin' sissy about him. He's got a big heart an' a great sense o' humor. He's the most likable kid I ever knew an', more than that, he's as gritty as they make 'em. Carefree? Yes, but that's a good trait in a healthy boy. It shows he's gettin' all there is in life out."

Uncle Ezra shifted his chewing tobacco from one cheek to the other and struck another blow for Bolivar. "You all recollect Sam Clemens's story about Huck Finn, I reckon," he said. "Well, lemme tell you somethin'! Down near Hannibal, where I used to live, I knowed the boy that Huck was patterned after—knowed him well—in fact, was chums with him—an' I want to



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say that for the real boy stuff he never could hold a candle to Bol Brown. Fact, I think Bol could 'a' give him cards an' spades an' beat him out 'long that line. No, sir, if every American boy could be molded out of the same stuff that Bol come from there wouldn't be no doubt about the future of this great Republic."

There was a moment of silence, during which Uncle Ezra tapped his foot on the floor and hummed a tune. Suddenly the storekeeper remembered something.

"Say, Ezry," he said, "I just been thinkin'—I sold that missin' spring to Hank Logan's wife last night jest afore I closed up."

"I told you that boy never hooked it," replied Uncle Ezra, triumphantly. "Bet on him, fellers—bet on him! He's a real one. Ain't that him comin' 'cross the street?"

The storekeeper looked. "That's him," he said, "an' he's headed in here. His ma must want some groc'ries."



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With that Hezekiah placed his glasses on the counter and, coming around in front, put wire covers on a box of prunes and a basket of apples.

"Don't reckon his ma wants any prunes or apples," he said, as a lame excuse for what was plainly a precautionary act on his part. A moment later the screen door opened and Bolivar Brown, followed by two medium-sized dogs of no especial breed, came in. The screen door was left wide open.

Bolivar was grinning and limping slightly. Stepping up to the counter, he said to Hezekiah:

"Got any oblong tea?"

"How are you, Bolivar?" replied the storekeeper. "You mean Oolong. Yep, I got some. How much does yer ma want?"

"I forgot that," said the boy, "but I reckon she won't need any more than a peck."

The storekeeper and his visitors broke into loud laughs.



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"Gee whiz, Bol!" said Hezekiah. "A peck of tea 'u'd last yer family six months. You don't mean no peck. Now, how much did yer ma say? Try an' recollect."

Boliver, slightly chagrined, scratched at the paint on the counter with a big toe. "I dunno, Mr. Pickwick," he said.

"How much money did she give you fer it?"

"Ten cents."

"Well," said the storekeeper, with a broad smile, "I reckon you want a eighth of a pound." The tea delivered, Mr. Pickwick asked, "Is that all?"

"I was tryin' to recollect if she said to get a stick of that striped candy you got in the jar there," came from the boy.

Once more the storekeeper laughed. "I hardly b'lieve she said anything about candy," he said, "but she prob'ly fergot it. If you'll shut that screen door so's the flies won't eat the candy before you kin eat it, I'll loan you a stick."

Bolivar shut the door and received the



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candy. He thanked the storekeeper and, speaking to Sport and Jack, his dogs, turned to leave. He hesitated upon being addressed by Uncle Ezra Fox.

"Say, Bol," said Uncle Ezra, "I notice yer faverin' yer left foot. What's wrong?"

"Tattooin'!"

"Tattooin'?" came from the surprised old man.

"Yep. Skeets did it. He read in a book how you could be marked so's yer corpse 'u'd always be identerfied. He stuck me with a needle. I'm goin' to tattoo him to-morrer."

Everybody smiled again, and then Mr. Pickwick asked, "Bol, how are you an' Miss Ann Eliza Chase gettin' along?"

"She's madder at me than ever. Sport an' Jack chased one of her cats into her house yesterday."

"Wa'n't no damage done, was they?" asked Peleg Lee.

"Turned the kitchen table over; that's all."



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"Pshaw!" came from the storekeeper. "That wa'n't nuthin'. She got mad too easy. Dogs will be dogs an' cats will be cats, an' as long as they are dogs an' cats they will be dogs chasin' cats."

Hezekiah Pickwick smiled a little at this outburst of his own logic. He didn't notice just at this time his old gray tomcat slowly entering the door. Neither did the others. The cat was noticed, however, but it was by Sport and Jack. In another instant the cat's presence was brought to the notice of all, forcibly.

Sport and Jack started for the cat with wild yelps. The cat saw them coming and leaped on the counter. Next he jumped to a shelf behind, knocking over a glass jar, which was smashed. Then followed a scene of wild confusion. The cat leaped from shelf to counter, from barrel to box, dislodging jars, pots, pans, and other articles of merchandise. The dogs followed as closely as they could under the circumstances, yelping. The group in the store was stampeded.



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Everybody ran outside but Hezekiah and Bolivar. The boy and the storekeeper tried to stop the chase. Finally the cat dived through the hole in the door and disappeared around the corner. The dogs knocked the door open and followed and the trouble was over.

When the storm had quieted, Bolivar moved away. "Hey, where you goin'?" asked the storekeeper, red in the face.

"I gotta take this tea home," replied Bolivar.

"Who's a-goin' to pay for this damage?"

"It's too bad, Mr. Pickwick, ain't it?"

"Too bad? Well, I should say it is. Who's a-goin' to pay?"

"I dunno. I never paid any damages when Sport an' Jack chased Miss Ann Eliza's cat."

The storekeeper saw the point and calmed down. He made a quick mental calculation. "Well," he said, "I reckon I ain't out more 'n three dollars."

Uncle Ezra was grinning broadly. Seeing





NEXT THE CAT JUMPED TO A SHELF BEHIND THE COUNTER KNOCKING  
OVER A GLASS JAR WHICH WAS SMASHED







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the storekeeper was to take a sensible view of the mix-up, he came back and asked: "Will three dollars cover it, Hez?"

"Jest about!"

"Well, it wuz mighty funny. I got a dollar an' a half's worth of fun out of it. I'll stand half."

"No, you won't," replied Hezekiah, now smiling. "I reckon three dollars won't bust me. But," he added, turning to Bolivar, "don't you ever bring them good-fer-nothin' dogs in here ag'in."

"That's just what Miss Ann Eliza said," Bolivar replied.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when there came an uproar from the street. Uncle Ezra quickly looked out and immediately returned.

"Frank Taylor's steers," he shouted. "They've busted out of the railroad stock-yards an' are stampedin' down the street."

Everybody ran to the door. Down the street came twenty steers, running wildly yet lumberingly. Taylor had intended to



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ship them that night. Something had maddened them and they had crashed through the fence of the pen. Dogs barking behind them and men and women yelling had added to their fright. As they came down the street they were a whirling avalanche of foaming bestial anger. Sheriff Graham was across the street.

"Everybody inside!" he shouted.

There was a rush for cover and by the time the leader of the steers was a block away the street was practically clear of human beings. Then there came a cry of anguish from the window of a home across from the Pickwick store. It was a woman's voice.

"Oh, Timmy! Oh, my God!" it screamed. The onlookers soon saw the reason. Hobb-ling slowly across the street, in the hope of getting home before the stampede reached him, was a little crippled boy, Tim Walker. An ailment of the spine prevented his moving rapidly, and bad judgment had put him in the path of danger.



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"Oh, Timmy!" screamed his mother again. And then she swooned.

On came the steers, bellowing in their rage, straight toward the crippled boy. The realization that he would not be able to get out of their way suddenly dawned on Tim and he stopped, petrified with fear. It seemed that he must be trampled to death and people turned away and covered their faces with their hands. Suddenly something happened that increased the excitement greatly. A small, lithe, brown-skinned boy, barefooted and hatless, sprang out into the street in front of Pickwick's store. Three leaps took him to the cripple's side and the next instant Tim was held tight in Bolivar Brown's embrace.

"Down, Tim!" yelled Bolivar.

The cripple was stupefied with fear. He stood frozen to the spot. With no more ado Bolivar placed one bare foot behind the little fellow's ankles and tripped him. Down they went in a heap, with Bolivar on top. Quickly he wrapped his legs around those



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of the cripple and locked his arms about his neck.

"Quiet, now, Tim!" he said.

As one human log the two boys lay in the street, directly in the path of the infuriated steers. Tears welled into the eyes of Uncle Ezra Fox.

"God," he said, with his eyes glued on the boys, "now's yer time to do me a favor. Save them boys!"

The leading steer was not ten feet from the lads. As he bore down on them the shrill voice of Skeets Martin, Bolivar's chum, rang out and broke a breathless silence.

"Jump 'em, you son-of-a-gun!" shouted Skeets.

The first steer, now three feet from the huddled mass of humanity, rose clumsily in the air and leaped clear over the boys. Cattle are much like sheep in some respects. Seeing their leader jump, the steers directly behind him followed suit, and when the mad animals had surged by and the dust had settled somewhat a small boy was seen to





THE FIRST STEER ROSE CLUMSILY IN THE AIR AND LEAPED CLEAR OVER THE BOYS







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arise from the street with another in his arms.

Bolivar carried Tim to the store and placed him in the arms of Uncle Ezra Fox.

"He ain't hurt — just skeered!" said Bolivar.

A hysterical woman rushed up and attempted to embrace him.

"Please don't!" he said, as he deftly dodged her. "I got to take ma's tea home to her or I'll get licked."

Picking up the package of tea, Bolivar disappeared around the store and started for home, eager to avoid the excited crowd near the scene of the rescue.

"That's what comes of knowin' cattle," said Skeets to Hezekiah. "Bol's uncle taught him that out on the farm."

By the time Bolivar had gone two blocks he had become his old self again, and the rescue incident had almost faded from his mind. As he passed the railroad station he noticed that the accommodation train was



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just in and that people were alighting from it. In Paw Paw Corner's allotment was a good-looking man of about thirty-five years who appeared to be a stranger in the town. Hesitating for a moment, his eye lit on the boy and he approached him.

"My boy," he said, "can you tell me if the family of George B. Brewster lives in this town?"

"Yes, sir. He's a judge," said Bolivar.

"I wonder if he's the man I want to see," mused the stranger. "Did he come from Higginsville and has he a daughter?"

"Yes, sir. The family moved here from Higginsville when the railroad came. His daughter's name is Millie. They live straight down this street in the red brick house on the corner just beyond the Square."

"Much obliged!" said the stranger. "That's the Brewster. He moved here about the time John Lake did, I think."

"Yes, sir, he did. John Lake's the president of the bank. He lives two blocks



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beyond the Brewsters in the big white house."

"Good!" The stranger gave Bolivar a nickel and started in the direction of the hotel. Stopping, he came back and asked: "By the way, is Mr. Brewster's daughter a Mrs. Smith, or Black, or something?"

"Oh no, sir!" replied Bolivar. "She ain't married. She's Miss Millie."

The stranger's face showed a trace of satisfaction. He quickly banished it, however, and, handing the boy a second nickel, he hurried away. Bolivar gazed after him puzzled.

"Huh!" the boy murmured. "That feller's all right, but I wonder what he wants with Mr. Brewster!"



## II

THE stampede set Paw Paw Corner in a turmoil of excitement and Bolivar's rescue of crippled Tim Walker would have swamped him with praise had people been able to corner him long enough to tell him their compliments. The boy, however, avoided all but a few intimates that night and refused to accept anything in the way of plaudits. The steers were rounded up out in the country, after they had tired, and were shipped as per schedule. Their stampede had caused no damage except to the railroad stockyards.

After the stranger had quizzed him, Bolivar broke into a trot, while Sport and Jack trotted along behind with their tongues lolling out. They had chased the steers to the town limits and were tired. Half a block from his home Bolivar saw a bone in



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the street. Picking it up, he called the dogs and tossed it between them. The desired result was not long in arriving.

Sport got the bone first and dropped it to growl at Jack. Jack immediately forgot his friendship for Sport and both dogs bristled. Bolivar came up behind Sport and gave him a push. The fight began.

As the dogs fought they worked their way toward the Brown home. Above the din of the conflict could be heard Bolivar's voice urging them on. Then came another voice—from the house.

"Bolivar Brown!" it said. "Stop that! Stop it, I say, and come here to me at once."

The voice belonged to Mrs. Brown. The boy ended the fight with a couple of kicks and went to the back door of the house. Mrs. Brown was putting a stick of wood in the cookstove.

"What do you want, ma?" asked Bolivar, dropping the tea on the kitchen table.



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"Look here, Bolivar Brown!" replied his mother. "What have I told you about fighting those dogs?" With that she took hold of his left ear.

"You said those dogs ought not to be 'lowed to fight," he replied, stepping closer to ease the strain on his ear.

"I said nothing of the sort! I told you not to fight those dogs, didn't I?" And Mrs. Brown gave the ear a yank for emphasis.

"Yes, ma, I remember now. But I can 'splain this fight."

"Well, there's your ear. Now explain it. And mind you tell the truth or you'll regret it."

"Well, ma, supposin'!"

"Supposin' what?"

Bolivar edged toward the door. There was a twinkle in his eye. "Supposin' you had a bone!"

"A what?"

"A bone. An' Miss Ann Eliza tried to get it away from you! Wouldn't you fight?"



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"What! What's that? I fight over a bone? Why, you disrespectful rascal, you! I'll—" But Bolivar had fled.

"My, that boy!" groaned Mrs. Brown. "I fight with Ann Eliza Chase over a bone! I'll make that young man smart for that. I'll get a switch when he comes home and—"

But at that point a neighbor came in and told her of Bolivar's rescue of Tim Walker, and Mrs. Brown beamed with pride.

For the moment let us return to the stranger. The look of satisfaction Bolivar had noticed had not belied the man's feelings. Once away from the boy his pace quickened and he smiled. Reaching the hotel, he registered as "James Locke, Kansas City," and asked to be assigned to a room immediately. Hep Shocker, the clerk, showed him to Number 5 on the second floor and left him. As the clerk's footsteps died away the stranger took writing paper from his grip and sat down at the table to pen a note.

At first he wrote rapidly; then he reviewed



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what he had written and tore it up. A period of thought followed and once again he wrote. This time he carefully blotted the note and inclosed it in an envelope. He then lay down on the bed and dropped off to sleep. Two hours later he awoke. Noting by his watch that it was almost 7 P.M., he hurried to the hotel lobby.

"Can I get a boy to deliver a note for me?" he asked of the clerk.

"We haven't got any boys here," replied Shocker, "but there's Bol Brown passing the hotel. Maybe he'll do it."

The clerk went out and hailed Bolivar, who was telling several men and boys he "hadn't done nothin' but used his knowledge of cattle" in the rescue. Bolivar responded to Shocker's call and the stranger recognized him. He asked him if he'd like to earn a dime. Bolivar said he would.

"Here it is," said the stranger, handing the boy a dime. "Kindly deliver this note to the person whose name it bears. Don't give it to anyone else."



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Hep Shocker strained both his eyes and his ears, but his curiosity remained unsatisfied. Bolivar merely said, "Yes, sir," and started away. At the corner he looked at the address. On the envelope was written, "For Miss Millie Brewster," and down in the left-hand corner was the word, "Personal."

"Golly!" muttered Bolivar. "That feller's got me guessin'. However, other people's business is—well, other people's business."

Putting the dime in his mouth, he started for the Brewster home on a slow lope. Hep Shocker returned to the hotel lobby greatly puzzled and not a little bit chagrined.



### III

PAW PAW CORNER, MISSOURI, isn't a town you'll find on the map, the reason being that its name has been changed. It was Paw Paw Corner when it had only five hundred inhabitants. With the coming of the railroad the population grew to about one thousand and civic pride brought about the change in name. In gathering material for this narrative the writer promised to use the old name of the town since, it was pointed out, to identify the place might bring embarrassment to certain families still living there.

This town, which bred Bolivar Brown, was situated on the Missouri River north of St. Joseph. It was the center of a very fertile agricultural country where the farmers knew nothing of hard times and the mer-



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chants prospered accordingly. Daily the tillers of the soil came to Paw Paw Corner to trade and daily and nightly the old men of the town gathered in the two general stores to argue, chew, smoke, and spit. As a rendezvous for these, Hezekiah Pickwick's store ranked first.

Bolivar Brown was twelve years old, healthy, brown, and invariably grimy. He wore no superfluous clothing except possibly on Sundays. Usually his raiment consisted of an old straw hat, a gray cotton shirt, and a pair of blue jeans, supported by a single string extending over his shoulder.

The day of the stampede was Saturday and the town was full of farmers. Having delivered the note to Miss Brewster, Bolivar sought the corner of the Square, where a street lecturer with a supply of "never failing" tooth medicine was expounding the virtues of his wares. There was a good-sized crowd around him when Bolivar came up, munching a sandwich he had bought at Hick's lunch counter. A few tried to draw



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the boy into a discussion of the rescue of Tim, but he refused to talk about it and they soon gave it up to listen to the lecturer's discourse.

Among those present was Skeets, Bolivar's chum, known to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Wilson, only as Charles. The boys greeted each other with "hellos" and soon Bolivar was deeply interested in the lecturer's talk. About that time the man stepped forward on his improvised platform and, holding up one hand, said:

"Friends, I have made a long talk here to-day and have claimed so much for Doctor Black's marvelous preparation that you, perhaps, feel I have exaggerated its worth. To demonstrate to you its wonderful power I shall extract free of charge, right here before your astonished eyes, a limited number of teeth. The work will be absolutely painless, made so by the application to the gums of this great African preparation, brought to this country after years of study in the jungles, by Doctor



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Black. If some one with an aching tooth, or one that aches now and then, will step up here before me I'll guarantee to remove it without pain in one minute, one-sixtieth of an hour, or sixty seconds."

Nobody made a move to accept and, after a brief wait, the invitation was repeated. Bolivar nudged Skeets and Skeets nudged Bolivar. Each had eligible teeth, but neither wanted to face the crowd. The boys stood there daring each other to accept until the lecturer, taking in the situation at a glance, shouted:

"Here! You two boys! Come up and let me help you."

Before they really knew what had happened the boys had been lifted on to the platform by men in the crowd. Ten minutes later Bolivar descended with one tooth, and Skeets with two, wrapped in paper. The preparation had done its work.

"If it can do what you have just seen," said the lecturer, "it can kill toothache. I am willing to sell a few packages, but re-



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member—it is only for advertising purposes.”

As the crowd pushed forward to buy the preparation the two boys adjourned to another corner and sat down on the sidewalk to compare results. Much to Bolivar's chagrin, he found Skeets had two teeth while he had but one. He hid his jealousy as best he could and quickly formulated a scheme to become the possessor of all three prizes.

“Say, Skeets,” said Bolivar, “what 'll you take for your'n?”

“What do you want 'em for?” demanded the suspicious Skeets.

“Why, I want 'em to scare my sister with.”

“Well, what 'll you give?” asked Skeets, realizing Bolivar had good use for the teeth. A diligent search of all pockets brought from Bolivar's clothes two matches, a key, two marbles, and a piece of string.

“Which of 'em 'll you take?” asked Bolivar.

“No good!” replied Skeets.



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"Give you any two."

"No good!"

"Well, all of 'em."

"No good!"

"Well, what 'll you take, then?"

"You know that watermelon you said was yours to borrow from Johnson's patch when it was big enough?"

"Yep."

"Lemme have that one an' the teeth are your'n."

Bolivar hated to give up his claim on that melon. He had watched it grow ever since Hiram Johnson, owner of the patch, had invited the boys angrily to "try to git them melons from under the nose of my new bulldog." He had insinuated that Bolivar and his friends had stolen his apples, which was untrue. Now that he had planted melons, he longed for a chance to get even with them for this fancied wrong. Johnson had challenged the boys to try to get his melons and they had decided to accept his dare in order to discipline him.



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The other boys knew Bolivar had selected this particular melon as the objective of his portion of the excursion which was to come, and they respected his claim. He realized, however, that there were other melons in the patch while first-class teeth were scarce, so he replied:

"All right! Give 'em here!" And the deal was made.

"Now," said Skeets, "I gotta go home."

Before he had gone ten steps Bolivar called him back. "Say, Skeets," he said, "What about Jimmy Lucas?"

"Whatcha mean?"

"Hasn't he got achin' teeth?"

"Yep; two of 'em."

"Le's me an' you get him up on the platform an' divide his up. He wouldn't know the value of 'em."

"Wish we could," replied Skeets, "but Jimmy's visitin' in Hawville. Won't be back for three days."

With that he bounded away and Bolivar turned his face homeward. At the next



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corner he came face to face with the stranger who had given him the dime for delivering the note. The man recognized him at once.

"We meet again," said the man, pleasantly. "I presume you handed my note to Miss Brewster."

"Yes, sir," replied the boy.

"Which house did you say is the Brewster home?"

Bolivar pointed it out and again they parted, Bolivar going home and to bed, the stranger walking in the direction of the Brewster residence.

It was now about eight o'clock. Millie Brewster, in her room, stole another look at the note.

DEAR MILLIE [it read],—At last I have found you. For years I have dreamed of seeing you again. I arrived in Paw Paw Corner this afternoon. If you will meet me in the Square, near the fountain, at eight-thirty o'clock, I'll explain everything. For the present it is best we meet this way. But come, dear—just this once, anyway.

JIM.

As she read it her head came down and



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she wept. Years she had wondered and waited, and now—now it seemed her vigil was to be rewarded. Years before he had disappeared just after he had come to Higginsville and given her a diamond ring. The ring had been cast off her finger but not out of her heart.

Suddenly she straightened up, determined. She would meet him and hear his reason.

“Oh, mother,” she called, “I think I’ll take a stroll around the Square before going to bed. The air is lovely to-night.”

“Don’t be gone long, daughter,” replied Mrs. Brewster, who was reading in her bedroom.

“I won’t.”

Millie Brewster, twenty-eight years old, was considered one of the sweetest girls in the town. Her quiet manner, her even temper, and her kindliness toward all won her admiration everywhere, and yet it might have been said she had no close friends. She seldom participated actively in social



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affairs and, while she numbered many young men among her acquaintances, she had never been known to have a love affair. As Uncle Ezra Fox once put it, she was "the sweetest bashful girl in the country."

As she left the house Millie's heart fluttered. Several times she stopped and almost turned back; then steeled herself and went on. She wondered if it could really be Jim—the Jim she knew, the Jim she once loved. Doubt came into her mind and she feared it was a trick. Yet who could be behind such a hoax? So far as she knew, none in Paw Paw Corner knew of Jim but her parents. Even in Higginsville, nine years before, their engagement had been kept a secret, with the idea of announcing it at a big dancing party. Then he had disappeared!

As these thoughts and many others flashed through her mind she came to a post surmounted by a gasoline lamp. There she hesitated, while the rays from the lamp reveled in the gold of her hair. She faltered



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but a moment and then there stepped out of the darkness a good-looking, clean-cut man who smiled and held out his hand.

"Millie!" he said in a low tone.

"Jim!"

She took his hand and was drawn out of the glare of the light—into his arms. Once he kissed her and then she drew away.

"Jim," she said. "Oh, Jim, it's wonderful to see you, but why, Jim—why did you leave?"

"I—I can't tell you just now, Millie, not for a little while."

"But you must. Things can't be the same, Jim, until you do. Please—I want them to be just the same—where have you been?"

The man released her hand and was quiet. Finally he looked squarely into her hopeful eyes and said: "Millie, it is better you know. After you learn the truth, there may be a way—some way—but unless you do know the truth there can be none."

Again he was silent, as though rallying



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his forces for a supreme effort. The girl waited.

"Jim," she suddenly asked, "is it possible you are—are married?"

"No!"

"Then tell me."

"Millie," he said, slowly, "I have been in the state penitentiary."

The girl's gaze continued fixed on his eyes for a moment; then she faltered and would have fallen had he not caught her. Nearby was a bench and upon that he placed her. Using his hat as a fan, the man soon brought her back to a realization of her surroundings.

"I'm sorry, dear," he said. "But some day perhaps you'll forgive me."

She arose from the seat and pulled herself together. Calmly now she looked at him. Then she extended her hand. He took it and kissed it.

"Good night and good-by, Jim!" she said.

Before he could reply she moved swiftly away and was soon lost in the darkness.



## IV

THE Brown family consisted of Dr. Joseph Brown, his wife, Mary, their only daughter, a girl of seventeen, and three boys, Bolivar, Christopher, and Jerry, the baby. Doctor Brown was a physician of the old school with a large practice. He was a very religious man and a regular attendant at the Methodist church, in which he held the position of deacon. Mrs. Brown was thoroughly in accord with her husband in his religious views and together they were endeavoring to bring up their children as churchgoers. They were succeeding very well with Christopher, or Kit, as he was called, and with Mary, but with Bolivar they were convinced they were making poor progress at best.

Every Sunday, promptly at eleven o'clock, Doctor Brown, Mrs. Brown, Mary,



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and Kit filed into the Brown pew. Bolivar was with them once in a while. That he was not a frequent attendant at church was not because of the lack of parental zeal. He had a habit of turning up missing when church time came, and, although his mother invariably declared he'd go next week, he frequently succeeded in eluding her.

Kit, although two years younger than Bolivar, was so nearly his size that the two boys looked as though they might be twins. Still, Bolivar was plumper than his brother and possessed of much more spirit.

When Bolivar reached home, after parting with the stranger, he half expected to have his ears boxed. Mrs. Brown, however, had forgotten the dog-fight incident and he escaped punishment. Next day being Sunday, Bolivar made his escape before church time and started for the river to swim. On reaching the rock where the boys usually undressed, he found four of his friends, including Skeets, carrying on a heated dis-



## BOLIVAR BROWN

cussion. Catching sight of Bolivar, Skeets shouted:

"Here's Bol Brown. We'll leave it to him, hey, fellers?"

The others assented and Skeets put a question to Bolivar.

"Say, Bol," he began, "ain't it so that a wild, er half-wild animal is afraid to touch you if you look him square in the eyes? Me and Jimmy says it is. Bill and Scrawney says it ain't."

Bolivar sat down and, picking up a stick, began to whittle, the other boys waiting anxiously for his reply.

"Well, fellers," he said, after a brief pause, "I ain't sure, but I think I side with Skeets and Jimmy. I think they prob'ly won't touch you, but I ain't certain."

"You see?" said Skeets, triumphantly.

"But," came from Scrawney, "Bol ain't sure about it, so whatcha goin' to do 'bout it?"

"Yes," chimed in Bill, "whatcha goin' to do 'bout it?"



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"Fellers," said Bolivar, "they's only one thing to do."

"What's that?" asked Scrawney.

"Try it."

"How you goin' to try it," queried Scrawney, "when they ain't any real animals 'round here 'cept in circuses, and they're in cages? I don't see any good in that idee." And Scrawney showed disappointment.

Skeets knew that when Bolivar suggested trying it he had a scheme in mind, so he asked, "How can we try it, Bol?"

"Well," said Bolivar, "you know that big watermelon yer goin' to borrer?"

"Yep."

"And you know Johnson's new bulldog?"

"Yep."

"Well, there you are. Try it on him. He can see yer eyes in the dark."

"But the melon ain't ripe yet," objected Skeets.

"It's big 'nough."

"But, you see—"



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Ah, he's afraid," sneered Scrawney, poking Skeets in the ribs.

"Who's afraid—me?" demanded Skeets. "Not me! I'll try it to-night if you fellers will go 'long and see it did."

The idea struck the boys right and they agreed to go. They were eager for the adventure.

"You'll be captain, Skeets," said Bolivar.

"Yep."

"Then you'll go through the patch first, eh?"

"Sure! I'm goin' to settle this argyment for good."

"All right!"

The matter was settled for the time being. After a swim the boys dressed and started homeward. At Bolivar's suggestion Skeets, as captain, instructed all to be near the fountain in the Square at eight o'clock that night.

Bolivar reached home about one o'clock and found the family just sitting down to



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dinner. As he took his place at the table Mrs. Brown looked at him sternly, but it was his father who first spoke.

"Bolivar," said Doctor Brown, "where were you at church time?"

"My goodness!" replied Bolivar, feigning surprise. "I didn't go, did I?"

"No foolishness! Where were you?"

Bolivar spent a moment thinking. "I didn't have a nickel to put in the plate," he finally replied, "so I thought I'd better not make the fam'ly 'pear stingy."

"No more of that!" said Doctor Brown. "You ran off again. Next Sunday you'll go to church or take the consequences. See that you are here when we start out."

"Yes, my son," said Mrs. Brown. "See that you are with us. I'll give you a nickel for the plate. If you don't go to church next Sunday you'll be very sorry."

"All right, ma!" came from the boy as he squirmed in his seat.

The storm had passed—no more was said about the church.



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Bolivar took another swim when dinner was over and idled away the remainder of the afternoon. After a light supper Bolivar started for the fountain, arriving at the hour agreed on. The other boys who were to participate in the melon expedition were waiting for him. It was not dark enough to begin operations, so all sat down on the sidewalk to discuss the plans for the "experiment."

Johnson's melon patch was surrounded by a high board fence, on the top of which was a strand of barbed wire. The patch, a small one, was located just outside the town limits. It was known that Johnson turned Bluch, the bulldog, loose in the patch each night. Skeets opened the discussion.

"Shall we get a ladder?" he asked. "The fence is pretty high."

"Ladder," sneered Bolivar. "It wouldn't be any good. 'Sides, we'd have to get two, or how would we get out?"

"That's so," acknowledged Skeets. "What had we better do?"



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"I know what I'm goin' to do," came from Bolivar. "I'm goin' through the fence."

"How?" asked Scrawney.

"Goin' to rip off a board?" asked Skeets.

"Done did it. Did it two days ago."

"Good boy, Bol!" said Scrawney, as he gave Bolivar a slap on the back.

"How come you did it?" asked Jimmy. "You didn't know we wus goin' to try this 'xperiment two days ago."

"No," drawled Bolivar, "but I knew I'd need a melon some day."

It was arranged that the line of march into the patch should be made up with Skeets leading, Bolivar second, Scrawney third, and Bill fourth. Jimmy was to stay outside as the watcher. The boys were sure Bluch would be in the patch and they were just a little nervous, although each tried to conceal the fact.

At nine o'clock Bolivar said it was dark enough and the boys started for the patch. A walk of five minutes brought them to the



## BOLIVAR BROWN

scene of operations, and Bolivar found the loose board and pulled it off. Skeets, after telling the others to follow, dropped through the hole. Bolivar went in right behind him and Scrawney and Bill were quick to join them. Bill, once inside, remained near the opening in the fence while Skeets, Bolivar, and Scrawney picked their way among the melons. Soon Skeets stopped.

"Here it is, fellers!" he whispered, taking his knife from his pocket to cut the stem.

"Hurry up, er the dog 'll be here," said Scrawney.

"Thought you wanted the dog to come," said Bolivar. "Are you backin' out?"

"No-o, but I didn't think it would be quite so scarey. "It's turrible dark and—Oh, what's that?"

All three crouched and listened.

"Geerusalem!" whispered Bolivar. "That's Bluch. He's comin', Skeets. Get ready to look him in the eye."

It was true. Bluch was coming and coming fast. By this time Scrawney had de-



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cided he cared little about science, anyway, and was making for the hole in the fence. Skeets faltered next.

“Bol—come on! Le’s get out!” he whispered, and with that he started for the fence on the run.

Bolivar hated to give in to fear and yet it was not he who was to subdue Bluch with his eyes. That being the case, he decided to let science go hang and he, also, started at top speed for the fence. The dog was gaining on him with every jump. Bolivar knew that when he dropped through the hole in the fence he’d be safe, as Bluch had not yet been known to exceed his authority by using force outside the patch.

On sped Bolivar and on came Bluch. It was a close finish, but the boy won. He reached the fence two feet ahead of the dog and sprang through the opening. Right there, however, something happened. A sliver caught his sleeve and delayed him, and before he could free himself Bluch made a spring and the boy came through



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minus the seat of his pants. He didn't find out about his loss until later.

Bolivar, having recovered his breath, walked slowly to the main street and found the four other lads seated on a box waiting for him.

"Here he comes," said Skeets. "Did he get you, Bol?"

"Naw!"

"Did you look him in the eyes?" asked Scrawney.

"Think I got eyes in the back of my head?"

"Say, fellers," Bolivar continued, "I had a blamed narrer 'scape. Had to do some runnin', but he never touched me."

Bolivar started to climb on the box, when Scrawney let out a loud laugh. The other three joined in, and while Bolivar wondered Skeets sang out, "Oh, Bol, where's the seat of yer pants?"

Bolivar quickly discovered the seat was missing. Although to him it was no laughing matter, a broad smile spread over his





BOLIVAR CAME THROUGH MINUS THE SEAT OF HIS PANTS







## BOLIVAR BROWN

face as he watched the convulsions of his friends.

"Who's got the seat, Bol?" asked Bill.

"Bluch," replied Bolivar. "I'm goin' home."

With no further explanation, Bolivar started for home on a dog-trot. He crept into the house through the back door, went up the back stairs, and was soon in bed beside his brother Kit, and sound asleep.

When Kit opened his eyes the next morning he saw Bolivar, up and dressed, intently examining something he was holding. Raising himself to a sitting posture, Kit saw that Bolivar was inspecting a pair of jeans. Kit asked the reason.

Bolivar did not reply at once, but continued his inspection of the jeans. He turned them over and over, held them at arm's length, and went through so many peculiar motions with them that Kit grew impatient with curiosity and insisted his brother explain.

"Say, Kit," Bolivar finally replied, "yer



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in hard luck. Look at your jeans!" And he held his own up, showing the torn seat.

"How did they get like that?" demanded Kit.

"Moths," said Bolivar. "The moths have et the whole seat out of your jeans."

Kit was worried. "Is that a fact?" he asked. "Gee whiz! I never thunk I had any moths in my clothes."

"Looks like you have."

"What had I better do?"

"First you want to get ma to fix 'em. Then always carry a buckeye an' you won't have any more trouble like this. Now, I'll go down an' tell ma for you an' then get you a buckeye."

He pitched the garment on a chair and went downstairs, wearing Kit's jeans.

Breakfast was ready when Bolivar stepped in the dining room, and he was ready for it. He ate with a relish. After his usual bowl of oatmeal and cream had been devoured Mrs. Brown sat down opposite him to drink her coffee. She was feeling



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exceptionally well that morning and expressed her pleasure at seeing Bolivar up so early. As a reward she promised him a piece of apple pie.

To say Bolivar was delighted wouldn't be half expressing it. Apple pie, to his mind, or stomach, was the triumph of cookery. He soon finished his egg and announced he was ready for the pie. At that point a cry came from above. It was Kit. "Oh, ma!" he called. "Come here!"

"What's the matter, I wonder," said Mrs. Brown. "I'll go up and see." She started for the stairway door.

"Ma, get my pie first!" pleaded Bolivar.

Mrs. Brown could see no reason for hurrying the pie along, and in spite of Bolivar's pleadings she started upstairs. With a growl of disgust Bolivar snatched his cap and went out the side door, over the fence, and down the street.

"Durn that kid!" he mumbled. "Had to holler just as I had that pie comin'." Then, with a twinkle in his eyes, he added,



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"Guess I better hunt him up that buck-eye."

Along the banks of the Missouri River in the Missouri-Kansas vicinity are to be found innumerable caves and crevasses, formed ages ago by the working of the water. There are few rivers that have such industrious currents as the Missouri. Where there is the slightest chance for cutting its banks, it cuts. Frequently the pounding current will encounter a vein of hard rock which will stand firm. In such a case, however, the water is apt to wash the soft earth under the rock away and continue on its way until it strikes another rock. When conditions so combine, the river makes a natural rock cave. Then a change in the current may come and leave the cave high and dry.

Bolivar and his boy friends made their headquarters in such a cave located just south of the town-limit line. Since its formation the river had shifted and left the



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cave about a hundred feet from the water. The boys had dug the cave out somewhat and shaped the interior into a room eight by ten feet in ground dimensions. To make the place inhabitable they had furnished it with old chairs, a kerosene lamp, a carpet, three or four pictures on the walls, and a small sheet-iron stove, in one corner, on which they frequently cooked. When the cave was cleaned up it presented rather an inviting appearance.

The entrance to the cave was banked with rocks and sod until the opening was just large enough to admit one boy at a time and he had to crawl. In order that the location might not be noticed by straggling pedestrians, cottonwood boughs were loosely piled over the entrance.

A prominent member of Bolivar's crowd was a little negro, Eli Anderson, whose parents lived near the cave. Because of his complexion Eli had been nicknamed Inky by his white playmates. Inky was the chief funmaker of the crowd. He could sing a



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little and dance a little more, and was always ready and willing to do either or both. More than that, he owned an old guitar with which he accompanied his singing. The cave without Inky would have been a dull place.

When Bolivar, after waiving his right to the pie, reached the Square, he was brought to a halt by a shrill whistle and, turning, saw Inky approaching with a basket on his head. As he drew near the little negro took a stick of gum from his pocket and handed it to Bolivar.

"Howdy, Bol!" he said, setting the basket on the ground. "What's de mattah? Yo looks oneasy."

Bolivar put the gum in his mouth and chewed in silence a moment. "Oh, nothin', Inky," he replied. "Guess I got up too early. Where you goin'?"

"Home."

"What's in the basket?"

"'Taters."

"Get yer mother to give you a couple for



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the cave. They'll come in handy for dinner some day."

"Ah'll do it."

"An' say, get the kids together at the cave this afternoon. Me an' Skeets wants to see 'em."

Bolivar, after leaving Inky, spent the morning playing marbles and swimming. He went home at noontime.



## V

JOHN LAKE, President of the Paw Paw Corner Bank, was supposed to be the town's wealthiest citizen. Uncle Ezra Fox owned a good deal of property, including a well-stocked farm north of town, and some considered him wealthier than Mr. Lake. There was no way to decide the question, however, and on the general concensus of opinion the first position financially in Paw Paw went to the banker. Nobody doubted but what John Lake was worth fifty thousand dollars, a fortune in those days. His big frame house was one of the town's landmarks, and his team of black carriage horses was admired on all sides. He had a wife and one child, a daughter eleven years old, known and loved by everybody as Katie. John Lake was proud and haughty, but his wife and little girl were just the re-



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verse. Generally speaking, John Lake was not liked by the people of Paw Paw. However, he did not seem to care what his fellow-townsmen thought of him.

“Why should I care what people think of me?” he was heard to say one day. “I owe them nothing—they owe me much. I’m of the Hamptons of Virginia. Let any one of them show me a family tree to match mine.”

Mr. Lake had no use for Bolivar and his boy friends. The lads had played “tick-tack” at his windows in the night and had treated him just as they had other citizens. He hated them for these pranks and they knew it. The banker, as a result, was seldom spared when the boys went out at night to play tricks.

Katie Lake liked Bolivar. She used to sit across the aisle from him in school. Of course, Bolivar liked Katie. She was the sort of little girl any small boy would like. Her chief points of attraction were her black hair and her sweet disposition. Bolivar



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once had a fight with another boy because the other lad had thrown a stone at Katie's white kitten. He didn't tell the boy why he was to be attacked, as that might have made him (Bolivar) the object of ridicule among the other boys. He simply sailed into him, after putting the kitten in the Lake front yard. Katie came out of the house just in time to see Bolivar get whipped. The disgrace was hard for him to bear, so he went home after the fight, without looking Katie's way. Next day she met him on the street.

"I think it was nice of you to whip that boy for hitting my kitten," she said. "Thank you very much!"

Bolivar was delighted. "Gee!" he murmured as he went his way, "I didn't know I licked him. But if she thinks I kin, I kin."

Straightway he hunted up the boy. In the fight that followed Bolivar came out victorious.

"I was sure I c'u'd do it when she talked like that," he said to himself. Then he



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went down to the river to bathe a swelling on his right cheek.

John Lake reached his bank on the morning after the boys had visited the melon patch, a little late and rather cross. Entering his private room, he slammed the door and sat down at his desk. Before him were piled letters which he began opening. The third one caused him surprise and he leaned back in his chair and read it the second time.

"What!" he muttered. "Jim Lake released and coming here? Why on earth did God give me such a man as a brother?"

The banker had an intuition that his brother would want money. He decided he'd run down to St. Joseph for a few days in the hope of avoiding a meeting with his relative. He started from the room, but was met at the door by the bank's teller.

"There's a man out here asking for you," announced the teller.

"What does he look like?"

"He's about thirty-two years old and



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dressed like a city man. He's a stranger in Paw Paw."

"Does he know I'm here?"

"Yes, sir. The bookkeeper told him you had come in."

"Show him in."

The banker resumed his seat and settled back in his chair. As he lighted a cigar the stranger—the man for whom Bolivar had delivered the note to Millie Brewster—entered. Offering John Lake his hand, the caller greeted him pleasantly with, "John, how are you?"

The banker took the proffered hand. "Pretty well, Jim," he replied. "When did you get in?"

"I've only been here a few hours," replied the stranger, taking a chair. "I'm at the hotel. Didn't want to bother you at home until I'd seen you, even though we are brothers."

"Quiet, Jim, or rather, don't mention our family connection so loudly just now, please."



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"Ashamed of it, eh?"

"Oh no!" And John Lake moved uneasily in his chair. "But these employees of mine don't know I ever had a brother and I'm not quite ready to spring the news on them yet."

The stranger laughed softly and the banker continued, "Are you registered as Lake at the hotel?"

"No. I made it Locke."

"Good! So you have money?"

"Money? Why, no."

"But you're stopping at the hotel."

"Yes. I had six dollars when I struck town. But that could hardly be called money."

"I presume it's money you want?"

"I want nothing that isn't coming to me."

"When are you going away?" asked the banker, showing signs of uneasiness.

"John, I haven't any place to go," replied the stranger. "I'm just out. I want to find work and begin all over again."



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"I don't believe you'd like Paw Paw Corner."

"I don't believe I would, either. I don't want to stay in this part of the Middle West. I'd like to go to Idaho, but, John, I can't go without money."

"Oh, Idaho isn't so far," said the banker. "It wouldn't be so hard to get there."

John Lake reached for his check book. The other man was silent.

"Jim," said the banker, as he wrote, "you were always known as James Maxwell after that little mixup. I have made out a check here to the order of James Maxwell. It is for fifty dollars. That will get you to Idaho and give you ten dollars on which to get started out there. I'd prefer you keep the name of Maxwell, or Locke, while in Paw Paw."

The banker extended the check toward his brother, but the latter made no move to accept it.

"Why don't you take it?" demanded the banker, impatiently.



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"Fifty dollars, John?" Why don't I take it? Ask yourself. I want only what is mine and I won't take a cent less."

"Jim," said the banker, putting the check in his pocket and arising abruptly, "I've got to go to St. Joe at once. There's a little business there I must attend to. Come along with me and we'll talk it over on the train. We have ten minutes to reach the depot."

The stranger made no reply. The brothers arrived at the depot just in time and were soon speeding toward St. Joseph.

When Bolivar reached home after his swim he found the family at the table. Dropping into his chair next to Kit's, he noticed his brother wore a new pair of jeans and seemed unusually happy.

"Bolivar," said Mrs. Brown, quietly, after a moment of silence, "your little trick played on Kit will cost you your pie. Your piece goes to Kit. Furthermore, I shall mend the torn jeans and you must



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wear them, patches and all. Kit has some new ones."

Bolivar did not reply. He had expected to have his ears boxed, but he little thought he would be deprived of his pie. It was an awful blow. Finishing his meal ahead of the rest, he picked up his hat and went out into the kitchen, intending to leave the house by the back door. As he closed the door leading to the dining room, he caught a glimpse of Kit's beaming face and heard him call:

"Oh, Bol, got that buckeye for me, yet?"

Turning away with a grunt, Bolivar caught sight of the pie, cut in pieces, all ready to be served. One piece was double the size of the others and he knew that was Kit's. At first he decided to eat that piece, but, acting on a second impulse, he tiptoed into the pantry and found the red-pepper can. Making an incision in Kit's pie with a knife, he poured pepper in the hole and went his way out of the house.

"Buckeyes are good for moths," he



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chuckled, "but they won't work on red pepper."

Climbing the back fence, he headed for the cave. On the way he picked up Skeets, Scrawney, Bill, Jimmy, and Inky, the last named with his guitar under his arm. When the party arrived at the entrance of the cave Skeets pulled the boughs aside and the boys entered, crawling single file. The aperture was left unobstructed in order that there might be light, there being no oil in the lamp. Each boy selected a seat and Inky began to tune his guitar. Having attended to this, the little negro sang a song called "Lazy Lize." The boys all joined in the chorus, which went something like this:

"Lazy Lize; Lazy Lize,  
Yo' hab got sech lubly eyes.  
Doan' yo' fret, mah black pet,  
We'll get married soon, yo' bet."

"Well, fellers," said Bolivar when Inky had put his guitar in a corner, "I thought



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of a scheme to-day. We been wishin' this cave had two rooms 'stead of one, 'ain't we?"

"We sure have," replied Scrawney.

"Well," continued Bolivar, "to get out some of that rock we gotta blast, 'ain't we?"

"They ain't any other way I know of," said Skeets.

"An' to blast we gotta have giant powder and to get giant powder we gotta have money. Now, fellers, here's a stumper—how we goin' to get the money?"

Bolivar settled back and waited for a reply, but none was forthcoming. Finally Scrawney replied: "I don't see any money in sight. Guess this here one room 'll have to do."

"Guess it will," agreed Skeets.

"Ah, gee! You ain't going to give up that easy, are you?" asked Bolivar.

"What kin we do?" asked Jimmy.

"My idee is to give a show."

"Boy, you sho'ly spoke a parable," shouted Inky, enthusiastically.



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The idea so delighted Inky that he sprang to the middle of the room and executed a hoe-down, finally dropping back into his seat breathless and grinning. The other boys liked the suggestion.

"You know that old blacksmith shop that 'ain't been used on the alley by Skeets's home?" queried Bolivar.

"Yep," said Scrawney.

"It b'longs to Skeets's dad. There's our opry house."

"Bully!" said Bill.

"Now 'bout the show. I figgered a minstrel would 'bout suit our talents. Inky an' his guitar kin be the orchestra. How's that?"

The boys were highly delighted. It was arranged that a meeting should be held at the old shop the next day for the first rehearsal.

Other plans concerning the show were discussed and each boy was given some commission to perform before the rehearsal.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

As the youngsters crawled out of the cave Skeets had an idea.

"Say, Bol," he asked, "how we goin' to get people to come to the show? We ain't much good on the stage."

Bolivar was stumped for a moment. Here was a point he hadn't considered. A moment of thinking, however, solved the problem.

"I've got it," he exclaimed. "We'll give it for the benefit of the church. We'll show my collection of teeth and give the money to the heathens of the Methodist church and the Cave Improvement Company."

"Fine!" shouted Skeets. "But how much of the money will the heathens get?"

"Oh, 'bout a cent out of every dime."

"Great!" was Scrawney's comment. Then he added with a grin: "Why, I bet even Ann Eliza Chase will come to help the heathens."

It brought a big laugh from the boys who then separated and started for their homes.



## VI

PAW PAW CORNER had known many shows given by its juvenile population. Usually the performance had taken place in a barn and the admission fee had been from two to twenty pins. Never had real money been charged. But the show planned by the cave boys was to be an exception. A new opera house was to be made out of the old blacksmith shop, equipped with a stage, footlights, and even a curtain, and so much time was to be spent rehearsing and such rare curiosities were to be exhibited that the boys felt justified in asking real money on this occasion. The admission was fixed at five cents.

Bolivar was to be master of ceremonies and interlocutor. Skeets was to be one end man and Inky the other. The other



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boys were to sit in the semicircle and join in the singing.

Besides Bolivar's collection of teeth there would be on exhibition a rat terrier belonging to Skeets, which would be put in the "wild animal section," together with a cat, two chickens, and two white rats, the latter the property of Scrawney. It was decided that the minstrel portion of the show should be held first, after which the curiosities and animals would be exhibited one by one, while Bolivar explained their points of attractiveness.

For two days the boys worked like beavers building the stage and making seats with lumber obtained from a near-by tumble-down shanty. Three of the youngsters brought a sheet each from home and from these the curtain was made. While hard at work the second day a bright idea came to Bolivar. Dropping his hammer, he called the boys to the stage.

"Say, fellers," he began, "we forgot somethin'."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"What?" asked Scrawney.

"The parade. We gotta have a parade."

"That's the ticket," said Skeets. "A parade will sure get us a crowd."

"It sho will," said Inky. "I'se in favah ob it."

It was arranged then and there that the parade should take place at noon on the day of the show. Bolivar volunteered to furnish the sign announcing the performance and Bill said he'd carry it. Inky agreed to beat Bolivar's old drum, and Skeets said he'd carry a flag. Until Saturday the boys did little else but work on the opera house and prepare for the parade.

The usual faker was addressing the usual crowd at the corner of the Square at noon on Saturday when from the distance came the measured beat of a drum. The faker stopped talking and the crowd became curious. Nearer and nearer came the drum-beat. Then around a corner came a diminutive black boy wearing a high silk hat and pounding away with two drum-



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sticks. Five boys trailed him, the first being Skeets, leading a Newfoundland dog with a ribbon on its tail. Next came the signbearer proudly carrying a rudely painted square yard of white cloth on which had been painted:

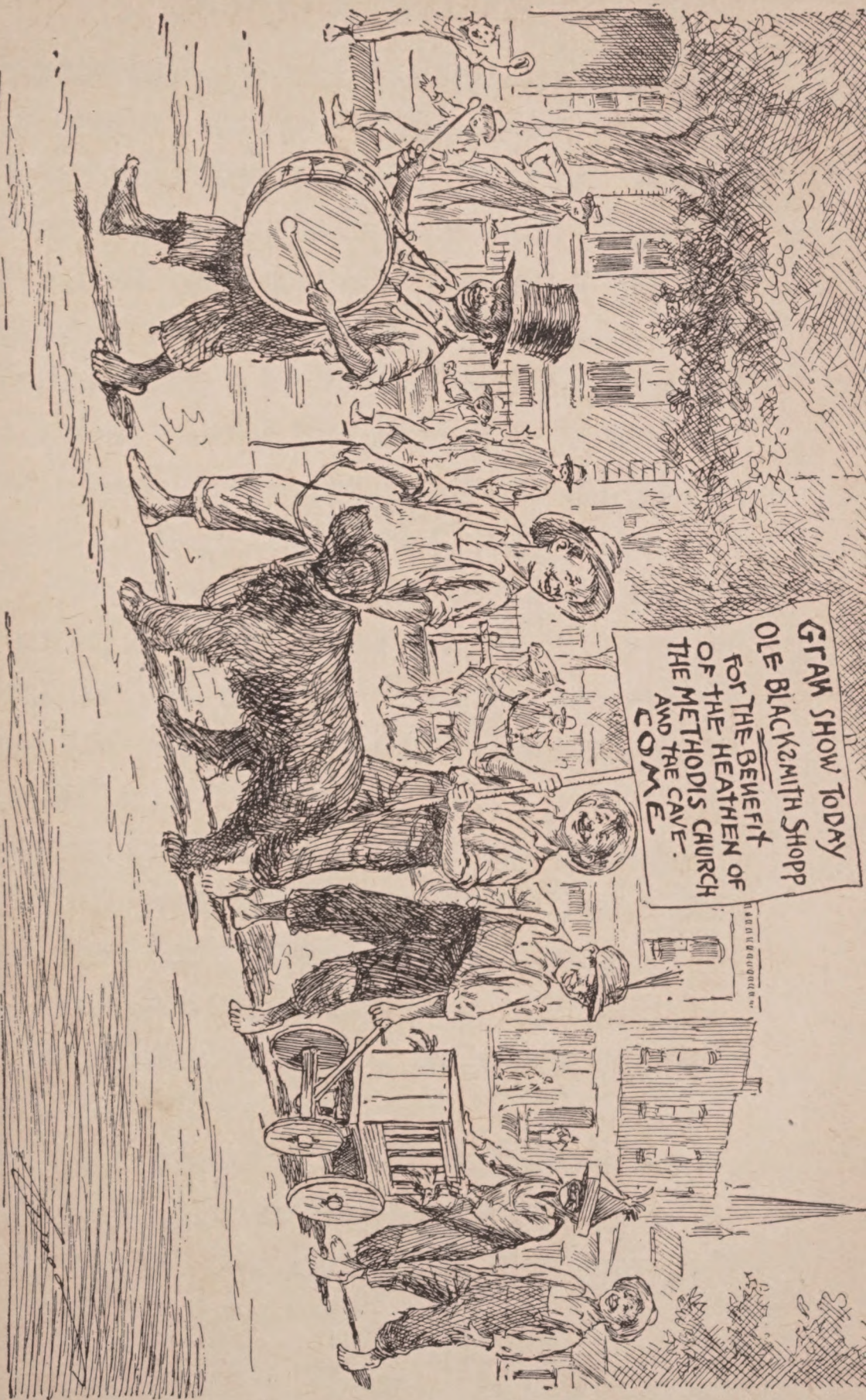
GRAN SHOW TO-DAY,  
OLE BLACKSMITH SHOPP,  
FOR THE HEATHEN OF THE  
METHODIS CHURCH  
AND THE CAVE  
COME

To say the crowd was surprised would not be putting it strongly enough. Many were members of the Methodist church. The faker was forgotten, and he didn't seem to care. It was the queerest sight Paw Paw Corner had seen in a long time.

When the faker and the crowd recovered from their surprise the boys had disappeared around another corner with a dozen youngsters, who had been in the faker's gathering, running after them. Proudly



GRAM SHOW TODAY  
OLE BLACKSMITH SHOPP  
FOR THE BENEFIT  
OF THE HEATHEN OF  
THE METHODIST CHURCH  
AND THE CAVE.  
COME



THE PARADE







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the procession moved two squares more and then headed for the "opera house."

Just as Inky turned the final corner before reaching the blacksmith shop he was hailed from the sidewalk by a tall, sedate man wearing black. "Say, boys!" he called, and then he rushed to the middle of the street, waving his umbrella. It was the Rev. Fennimore Beggs, pastor of the Methodist church of Paw Paw Corner.

"Here, you boys!" the preacher almost screamed. "You must destroy that sign. What do you mean? What do you mean? You are slandering and disgracing my church."

For an instant Inky, who was nearest the preacher, was speechless with fear. Bill drew near him, however, and, taking courage, the little negro replied:

"Why, Mistah Beggs, we gwine ter he'p yoh heatheners."

"Yes," chimed in Bolivar, "we're workin' for you, Mister Beggs. We're tryin' to get money for the heathens in your church."



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The preacher was perplexed. The boys appeared to mean well, yet their procession was ridiculous, and he did not relish the idea of having his church laughed at. It was apparent he didn't know just how to handle the situation, for the moment.

"My little friends," he finally began, "I know you mean well enough, but—"

He got no further. A shrill voice, unmistakably that of an irate woman, interrupted him. It was the voice of Ann Eliza Chase.

"Well, Bolivar Brown!" she said. "You young scallawag, you! What do you mean by disgracing the church—your father's church, too? Hey, what do you mean?"

Turning, she noticed the presence of the preacher for the first time. Addressing him, she said:

"Save our church, Brother Beggs. Isn't it terrible?"

Ann Eliza stopped, all out of breath, and stood, arms akimbo, waiting for action from the preacher. Undecided as the latter



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may have been up to that point, he saw his duty now. Incidentally, the unusual sight of the preacher and the old maid standing in the street surrounded by the boys attracted a goodly crowd of people. This fact served to urge the preacher on.

"Bolivar," he said, sternly, "this thing has gone far enough. You must destroy that sign."

"Yes, Bolivar Brown, you're disgracing the church," shouted the old maid. "If you don't quit it I'll get the law onto you. You hear me?"

The crowd increased in size steadily and Bolivar noticed that the show was receiving excellent advertisement. The preacher began to edge toward the sidewalk. It was up to Bolivar to say something.

"O' course, Mister Beggs," he said, "we won't do nothin' for you an' Miss Chase's heathen if you ain't agreeable to it. We only got a block more to go, so we'll march on an' then we won't parade any more with the sign. Is that all satisfactory?"



## BOLIVAR BROWN

Doctor Beggs, anxious to fade from the public eye, readily agreed, and the procession formed again and moved away with the crowd, or most of it, following and laughing. The sign had done the work. Bolivar Brown's show for the heathen was the talk of the town. Ann Eliza Chase was rip-roaring mad over it and did not hesitate to say so.

When Miss Chase stopped in front of Uncle Ezra Fox's house, on her way home, and told him savagely how the church had been disgraced, Uncle Ezra laughed. It was one of the side-splitting laughs for which he was famous.

"Why, Miss Chase," he said, when he recovered, "you wusn't never a boy."

"For which I am truly thankful," she snapped.

"Well, I wus," Uncle Ezra continued. "I'm a goin' to that show. I'd go if I had to pay a dollar to get in an' had to borrer the dollar. Boys 'ull be boys an' that Bol Brown sure is a wonder. It's a front seat



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at the show for me." And Uncle Ezra indulged in another side-splitter.

Ann Eliza Chase was furious with Uncle Ezra. Frowning deeply, she moved away without further comment.

"Better come along an' see the show?" Uncle Ezra suggested.

"Not me!" was her reply, as she quickened her pace.

Although the curtain was not to rise until two-thirty o'clock, by one there were a dozen boys waiting at the door of the blacksmith shop to be admitted. Half an hour later, when Bolivar began to sell tickets, there were more than thirty. By two-fifteen an audience of about fifty people had gathered in the "theater." Boys were in the majority, but the number of girls and adults surprised Bolivar greatly. He had not expected them. Shortly after two Uncle Ezra approached Bolivar and bought a ticket.

"How much, Bol?" he asked.

"Fi' cents."



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"Here's a quarter. 'Ain't got nothin' less."

And Uncle Ezra moved toward the entrance, refusing his change. At that point a rustle of skirts was heard and a shrill voice said:

"Bolivar Brown, I want a ticket. There's your nickel."

It was Ann Eliza Chase. She glared at the boy like a tigress.

Bolivar was greatly surprised; so was Uncle Ezra. She received her ticket and, turning, came face to face with Uncle Ezra.

"Why, howdy, Miss Chase!" he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "Thought you said you wusn't comin' to the show?"

Looking straight at Bolivar, the old maid replied: "I wasn't, but I thought the church should have somebody here to see these good-fer-nothing boys don't heap any more disgrace on it. That's why I came."

With that Miss Chase gave her ticket to Skeets, at the entrance, and passed haugh-



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tily in. Uncle Ezra grinned at Bolivar; then at Skeets.

"Gee, whiz, boys!" was his comment as he proceeded into the theater.

Promptly at two-thirty by Uncle Ezra's watch Bolivar and Skeets went behind the scenes, leaving the door in charge of Eddie Berry, one of the small boys in the audience. Eddie, although he had paid his nickel to see the show, was highly honored with the duty imposed on him. He guarded the entrance zealously, even going so far as to chase a little negro boy away from the sidewalk and to throw rocks at a big dog that was loafing on the other side of the street.

After ten minutes spent in smearing their faces with burnt cork of their own make, the boys, with the exception of Inky and Skeets, took their places in the semicircle. Inky and Skeets, being the end men, remained behind to make a "grand entrance" and, incidentally, to pull the curtain up. All being in readiness, Bolivar, from his position in the middle, gave the signal, and



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the wall of white, composed of the three sheets, was pulled out of the way. The audience applauded vigorously. When the noise died away, Bolivar stood up and said:

"I will now interduce Mr. Skeets, end man for the cave, and Mister Inky, end man for the heathens."

Skeets and Inky marched across the stage in true minstrel style and took their places at the ends of the semicircle. Ann Eliza Chase had been seen to start nervously at the mention of the word "heathens," but she remained silent. Uncle Ezra Fox was almost ready to burst with suppressed laughter.

The end men having arrived, Bolivar announced that Inky would sing "One Mo' Ribber fo' to Cross." With his guitar hanging by a string from his neck, the little negro took the middle of the stage and rendered his number very creditably. He was forced to respond to three encores before the audience was willing to let the show proceed.



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When he was finally permitted to resume his chair, Inky turned to Bolivar and said:

“Mistah Brown, does yo’ know why lots ob Paw Paw Co’nah folks doan’ hab to wohry ’bout goin’ ter de bad place?”

Receiving Bolivar’s negative answer, Inky continued, “Because dey is too green ter burn.”

The joke hit Uncle Ezra Fox just right. It seemed that he had been waiting for the opportunity to release his pent-up mirth and he burst out with a loud, “Ha, ha, ha!” Next in his merriment he leaned so far back in his chair that it gave way and precipitated him on the floor. The accident pleased Ann Eliza Chase greatly and she was convulsed with laughter. It was necessary to stop the show until Uncle Ezra recovered his equilibrium and Miss Chase regained her composure. Bolivar then announced that Skeets would sing, “The Babies in Our Block.”

Even though he did start in the wrong key, Skeets made a hit with the song and



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had to respond to two encores. Just as he was preparing to tell a joke there came a loud rumbling noise from overhead. It sounded as though the roof was being torn off. Again the performance stopped and for a few seconds audience and performers sat motionless, wondering what was the cause of the noise. The rumbling ended with a bumping sound, which seemed to indicate that something had dropped from the roof. Everybody rushed outside, and there they found Chuck Andrews, son of the cobbler, sitting on the ground holding one hand to his mouth and crying. He had come to grief while stealing a look at the show through a small hole in the roof.

A physical examination of the boy, conducted by Uncle Ezra Fox, showed that the loss of a tooth was the extent of Chuck's injuries. The youngster's sister, who was in the audience, took him home and the performance was resumed.

A joke from Skeets, two more from Inky, and a song from Bill completed the min-



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strel portion of the entertainment, and then Bolivar announced that he would exhibit some relics and curiosities. As the audience applauded with vigor the curtain came down and Bolivar hurriedly washed off most of the black he had smeared on his face. Five minutes later he was out near the door with his curiosities spread before him on a little table. They consisted merely of the teeth the street dentist had abstracted from the jaws of Skeets and himself. The crowd, all but Miss Chase, seemed highly interested in the teeth. Ann Eliza was disgusted.

"Now, ladies and gents," said Bolivar, when all had examined the teeth minutely, "I got a surprise for you."

Drawing a small piece of white substance from his pocket, he exhibited it proudly.

"This here," he announced, "is the tooth of our feller-townsmen, Chuck Andrews, lost by him in his turrible fall from the roof of our opry house."

Miss Chase hurried out at this point,



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declaring she really feared she'd never be able to eat again. The "curiosities" having been thoroughly exhibited for the edification of all, the crowd passed out of the place and dispersed. Thus closed the show, leaving the Cave Improvement Company and the "heathens" ahead two dollars and seventy cents and a knife with one broken blade which Bolivar had accepted from a small boy in lieu of cash. The boys were certain the show had proved a grand success and so was Uncle Ezra Fox.



## VII

WHEN the St. Joseph evening paper reached Paw Paw Corner Saturday night it contained a piece of news that caused a sensation. The story concerned John Lake and there was half a column of it on the front page. It was headed something like this:

### JOHN LAKE ASSAULTED

---

Paw Paw Corner Banker Attacked Here Last Night by  
an Unknown—Injuries Slight.

The article said that Mr. Lake, who had been in St. Joseph several days on business, had been attacked while on his way to a theatrical performance. The assassin, the paper said, was undoubtedly bent on robbing the banker. He had slipped up behind



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Mr. Lake and had struck him on the head with some blunt instrument. The assault had occurred as the Paw Paw Corner man was passing an alley on Felix Street. Mr. Lake was knocked down by the blow, but the arrival of a policeman caused the hold-up man to take to his heels before he could relieve the banker of his money and other valuables. The paper quoted Mr. Lake as follows:

“I was passing along Felix Street last night on my way from the Pacific House to a theater. As I passed the alley on the south side of the street, between Fourth and Fifth, I was struck from behind and knocked down. I did not lose consciousness. Whoever the person was who hit me was undoubtedly a robber, but he was frightened away by a policeman before he could rifle my pockets. I had quite a sum of money with me, but it is not probable that the marauder knew this.”

“Mr. Lake,” the paper went on to say, “is one of Northwest Missouri’s most prominent business men. He is inclined to regard the incident lightly, and, being a big-hearted man, has asked the police not to



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search for the assassin, who, he thinks, was some poor fellow in need of money for food."

The assault gave the loiterers in Pickwick's store something to talk about and guess at. They were all agreed that the banker should have offered a reward for the apprehension of the assassin and could not understand why he had not done so.

"It looks a bit queer to me," said Uncle Ezra Fox in the store on Sunday morning. "John Lake ain't so big hearted that he'd let some feller knock him down without tryin' to get quits with him."

"Don't you reckon mebbe he's thinkin' 'bout what a reward might cost him?" queried Peleg Lee.

"I got a idee he is," came from Mr. Pickwick. "He's quite good at hangin' on to the pennies—leastways, he is when he's in this store."

"That ain't it," said Uncle Ezra. "There's mighty few men who, when bit, wouldn't give a nickel to bite back, an' John Lake ain't out of the ordinary in that re-



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spect. Lake ain't big hearted, I tell you. Even if he was, it wouldn't make no difference in a case like this. Hit a big-hearted man on the head from behind an' you'll shrink his heart to the hittin'-back size. I don't understand this here assault at all."

Mr. Lake arrived in Paw Paw Corner on the evening train Sunday and went straight to his bank. Those who saw him noticed a small piece of court-plaster on his head, but otherwise there were no evidences of the assault. He avoided discussing the affair. Nobody was at the bank, and, after looking over some mail, he left the building and walked briskly to the residence of James Todd, his teller. Mr. Todd was at home and ushered him into the parlor.

"I can stay but a moment," said Mr. Lake. "I just dropped in to ask how the bank has been getting along since I left."

"Excellently," replied the teller.

"Good! By the way, Todd, do you remember a man you ushered into my office, last Monday, I think it was?"



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"Yes, I believe I do. You mean that stranger."

"Yes. I wish you would say nothing about his call. For business reasons I'd rather not have it known. I hope you haven't spoken to anyone of him."

"I don't think I have," said the teller. "I was very busy that day and scarcely noticed him. You may rest assured I shall say nothing about him."

The banker was pleased. Avoiding a lengthy discussion of the assault in St. Joseph, he left the Todd home and went to his own and ate his supper. After the meal he visited his family physician, Doctor Dalton, to have him dress the wound on his head. Doctor Dalton found the wound very slight, but thought he detected marks on the banker's throat.

"It looks as though somebody had tried to choke you," he said.

The banker seemed surprised. "I don't remember that the man clutched my throat," he said. "You must be wrong, doctor."



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The abrasions were minor and the doctor said nothing more about them. The banker went home.

The Sunday paper, which arrived from St. Joseph about noon, had a second story about the assault, in which it was stated that a small pearl-handled revolver, bearing the initials "J. L." had been picked up at the scene of the affair and turned over to the police. One cartridge had been snapped but had failed to explode. Mr. Lake notified the police that the weapon was his and explained that it must have dropped from his pocket when he fell. He cleared away the mystery of the snapped cartridge by saying he had attempted to shoot a rabbit while driving near Paw Paw Corner several days before going to St. Joseph. The police forwarded the revolver to him.

The people of Paw Paw Corner read about the revolver with much interest, but the entire matter wore itself out with the gossips in two or three days. No developments came and Mr. Lake would not dis-



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cuss the assault. Uncle Ezra Fox was not satisfied. He believed some mysterious feature of the mixup was being withheld.

"Some day," he said in Pickwick's store, "we'll know more about that St. Joe affair. Just you wait an' see."

When Bolivar dropped into his chair at the supper table on arriving home after the show, Doctor Brown looked at him sternly.

"Bolivar," he said, "I have been told of your disgraceful use of the church in connection with your show."

"Who told you, dad?" asked Kit.

"Quiet, Christopher! I am addressing Bolivar." Then, to the culprit, he continued: "It was Miss Chase who told me. She said it was disgusting. I have decided, my son, that you must make amends for your shocking conduct. To-morrow you must accompany your mother and me to church. There must be no evasion. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, sir!" replied Bolivar meekly.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

“And, furthermore, you must go every Sunday for two months.”

Bolivar did not reply and the subject was dropped. The boy had no intention of going to church the following day. As he ate in silence he made up his mind to rise early and slip off without breakfast, if necessary, to avoid carrying out his father's order. There were two reasons why he didn't like to go to worship. The services bored him and the other boys who didn't have to go teased him.

After supper Bolivar and Kit went to their room and to bed. Kit was in a mood for talking, but his brother was silent and grumpy. They had been in bed but a few minutes when Kit nudged Bolivar and asked:

“Well, goin' to church to-morrer, eh?”

There was no reply from Bolivar.

“Goin' to drop a quarter of yer heathen money in the box?”

“Mebbe,” growled Bolivar. “What you goin' to drop, a buckeye or a piece of pie?”



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The reply effectually squelched Kit, and in a short time both boys were asleep.

Contrary to his wish, Bolivar did not wake early. It was after nine o'clock when Kit and he opened their eyes at about the same time. Bolivar knew it was late because the sun was shining across the bed. He decided he'd better get up and get out if he was to escape going to church. Lazily he crawled from the bed, with Kit close behind him, and both looked for their clothes. Kit found his, but Bolivar's were not in the room. Kit dressed while Bolivar hunted. Finally the truth dawned on Bolivar. His father had removed the garments to prevent his son's escape. Stopping in the middle of the floor, Bolivar said to Kit:

"Kit, I'll give you a dime if you'll lend me your shirt an' pants."

"Where's yours?" asked Kit.

"Ma's mendin' 'em, I guess."

"Can't do it," said Kit, with a grin, as he started out of the room. "I'll go get



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you one of Mary's dresses if you want me to."

Bolivar, thoroughly angry, started for his brother, and as Kit went through the door he received a kick that sent him flying down the hall. Bolivar then went back to bed. There seemed to be nothing else to do.

He had been in bed but a few minutes when Doctor Brown entered the room, carrying the lad's Sunday clothes. These he deposited on a chair.

"There, my son, are your clothes," said Doctor Brown. "Get up and dress for church. I took your others out of the room last night. Furthermore, I took from your pocket all the show money, which I shall return to you after church. If you are not on hand at services every cent of it shall be dropped in the contribution box."

Mr. Brown left the room and Bolivar remained in bed deep in thought. For once in his life he had to admit he was stumped. He could think of absolutely no scheme whereby he might escape going to church.



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He couldn't have the show money dropped in the plate, as it wasn't all his, and the only way he could recover it was to obey his father. There was no getting out of it, so Bolivar put on his clothes. He took all the time he could in arraying himself in his clothing, and when he went downstairs he found the family about ready to start. He decided to make one final effort to escape the humiliation of going to church, especially with the family.

"Oh, dad," he said, "do I have to go?"

"Indeed you do!" replied Doctor Brown.

"Well, I want to go 'round to Skeets's house first. I'll meet you at the door of the church."

"No, you won't. You'll come right along with us."

That settled it, and fifteen minutes later the family started out. Doctor Brown and Kit went ahead; Mary and the baby were next, and then came Bolivar and his mother. Bolivar hoped sincerely that he might be able to make the journey without being



## BOLIVAR BROWN

seen by any of the boys, but disappointment was to be his lot. Halfway down the second block Scrawney was sitting on a board fence, whittling.

Scrawney saw Bolivar a quarter of a block away and, catching the unhappy boy's eye, made a face at him. When Bolivar looked again Scrawney had his hands clasped and was looking solemnly in the air as though in prayer. Scrawney's pantomime continued until Bolivar was about to pass him and then he snickered. It was more than Bolivar could stand. Unnoticed by his mother, Bolivar gave Scrawney a push that sent him off the fence to the ground on the other side. Not a sound came from Scrawney, and a moment later, when Bolivar looked back, he saw his persecutor sitting on the fence again, rubbing his elbow. It was sweet revenge for Bolivar.

The opening hymn found Bolivar seated beside his mother in the Brown pew. Sourly he looked around, and then, much to his joy, he found directly in front of him an-



## BOLIVAR BROWN

other dressed-up bored lad, none other than Skeets. After the hymn Skeets felt a nudge in the back. He turned his head slightly and caught a whisper, which said:

“What brought you here, Skeets?”

“Ma’s punishin’ me fer the show,” Skeets whispered.

“Same here!”

Ann Eliza Chase, a neighbor of the Wilson family, had accompanied Mrs. Wilson and Skeets to church and was occupying the Wilson pew, with Skeets on one side and his mother on the other. Bolivar was certain the old maid was primarily responsible for the vigilance on the part of his father that had resulted in the carrying out of the sentence. He believed, further, that it was her influence that had brought Skeets to the services. Bolivar made a mental resolve to get even with Ann Eliza Chase some day, somehow.



## VIII

THE discovery of Skeets in church being punished also pleased Bolivar, and he felt 100 per cent better. He even tried to sing a little when his mother held the hymn book before him. He noticed, however, that when he sang Miss Chase stopped, so he decided to let her have the field. For the first half hour Bolivar got along fairly well, but when the preacher announced the sermon he grew restless.

By the time Doctor Beggs was fairly launched in his sermon Bolivar was almost ready to burst with pent-up energy and he began to seek divertisement to relieve the monotony. After untying his shoe strings and tying them up again, he examined the contents of his pockets. Next he looked through a hymn book, thinking possibly



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he might find a picture. Thus he relieved his feelings for a while, but it wasn't long until he was restless again.

Leaning forward, he touched Skeets on the arm. Skeets turned slightly and Bolivar whispered.

"Ain't you about ready to bust?"

Skeets did not dare reply, and Bolivar tried it again.

"Got any chewin' gum?"

This time Skeets paid not the slightest attention and Bolivar was provoked. Taking a pin from his waistband, he stuck Skeets in the arm. The sudden pain caused Skeets to jump and say, "Ouch!" Doctor Beggs brought his discourse to an abrupt end and looked straight at Skeets, who colored and rubbed his arm. Bolivar opened a hymn book and glued his eyes on its pages. Miss Chase moved several inches away from Skeets and murmured, "Well!" Doctor Beggs kept his gaze fixed on Skeets a moment and then resumed his talk. Mrs. Wilson was humiliated.



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Ten minutes later Bolivar was more restless than ever and he began another hunt for something to do to make the minutes fly. On the floor was a big grasshopper, and Bolivar soon made him a prisoner.

"Spit tobacco!" commanded the boy. The grasshopper obeyed and Bolivar was in honor bound to let it go. Again he became restless.

As in the case of many churches, there were no partitions under the seats in the Paw Paw Methodist edifice. Bolivar discovered this fact after the grasshopper had gone, and he decided to work off a little temperament on Skeets's feet. He waited until Doctor Beggs was announcing the final prayer, and then, as the congregation knelt, he dropped to his knees. Putting his hands under the pew ahead he grasped an ankle firmly in each one. He gave the ankles a squeeze and the owner pulled hard to release them.

"Gee!" murmured Bolivar, "Skeets is skinnier than I thought he was."



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Again he squeezed and once more the owner of the ankles pulled. Bolivar next knocked the feet together. The legs pulled, but his grip was not to be broken, and he held on all through the prayer.

So intent was Bolivar on tormenting Skeets that he did not notice the end of the prayer nor did he see the congregation rise. He was still holding the ankles and their owner was struggling furiously to release them when the people began to pass out of the church. At this juncture a shrill feminine voice called:

“Bolivar Brown, you let go my ankles.”

The boy immediately released the ankles and, rising, came face to face with Ann Eliza Chase, who was boiling over with rage.

Doctor Beggs, who had started for his study room, stopped and looked at Miss Chase. So did all the members of the congregation who had not left the church. Uncle Ezra Fox was seen to leave his seat near the door and make a hurried exit, holding his sides.



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Doctor Beggs gazed at Bolivar a moment and then continued on his way, evidently realizing that, whatever the trouble was, it was all over. Skeets slipped away, grinning, and Bolivar followed. He managed to become separated from the rest of the Brown family in the crowd and, reaching the open air, disappeared around a corner as quickly as he could.

"Darn it!" he muttered. "How did I know they was that old maid's legs? I thought they was Skeets's. I b'lieve I'll take a punch at that feller when I get him."

Miss Chase did not wait for Mrs. Wilson. She hurried out of the church and went home. Her peculiar actions were a live topic of conversation among the members of the congregation. Skeets was tickled and so was Uncle Ezra Fox.

After running for three blocks, Bolivar dropped into a walk and headed for the cave. He deemed it inadvisable to go home to dinner, since he had his doubts as to





"BOLIVAR BROWN, YOU LET GO MY ANKLES"







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whether or not he would be permitted to eat any. And then he thought it best to give his father a chance to think things over and acquire some calm before facing him. He could go without eating until supper time, and he made up his mind to pursue that course.

But as Bolivar was passing the Anderson cabin an idea came to him, suggested by the sight of Inky's home. Acting on it, he opened the gate and walked around the house. Through a window in the rear he saw the negro family at dinner, and, stepping up to the back door, he rapped. Inky opened the door and Bolivar went in.

Zeb Anderson and Inky's two sisters greeted the white boy pleasantly. Mrs. Anderson went farther.

"Bol, yo' had dinnah yet?" she asked.

Bolivar hesitated, and she anticipated his reply. "Ah don't reckon yo' is, so ef yo' ain't too proud to eat with cullud folks, draw up an' light in."

Bolivar wasn't proud. His parents looked



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on negroes only as good servants and always kept them in their places, but their son drew no color line. The race question didn't bother him. The invitation to eat was just what he wanted and he lost no time in drawing up a chair. He sat between Inky and Mrs. Anderson and his plate was heaped with scrambled eggs, corn bread, and fried potatoes. The Andersons were pleased to be hosts to the white boy and plainly showed it. All were eager to wait on him and he was given the best of everything.

Mrs. Anderson did most of the talking for the family. She plied the boy with question after question, all of which Bolivar answered between mouthfuls. Among others, she asked about Ann Eliza Chase, Uncle Ezra Fox, and John Lake. She had just mentioned the banker when, on looking out the window, she exclaimed:

"Why, theh's Mistah Lake now! I wondah what he's prowlin' 'round heah for?"

Through the window Mr. Lake could be



## BOLIVAR BROWN

seen stooping to pick up something just a few feet from the cave. What he was doing there was more than Bolivar could guess. The simple fact that he was in the vicinity was not unusual, since he was in the habit of taking a walk every pleasant Sunday. But in this instance he appeared to be searching for something. He walked about slowly, stooping now and then to pick up small pieces of stone or earth—just which those at the table could not tell. Whatever they were he seemed deeply interested in them, as he would drop them in his coat pocket after scrutinizing them.

Mr. Lake did not tarry in the vicinity of the cave long. Two or three minutes after Mrs. Anderson had discovered him, he walked away and disappeared over a hill, much to the relief of Bolivar and Inky, who momentarily expected him to find the mouth of the cave.

When the banker had passed out of sight the conversation switched from him to some fine apple pie Mrs. Anderson was



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serving. Bolivar ate his piece with a relish and wanted more. He was too bashful to ask for it, however, so he laid plans to acquire another helping in another way. Catching Inky's eye, Bolivar attracted his attention below the table. This accomplished, Bolivar showed Inky a rusty knife with one damaged blade and glanced significantly from it to the pie before the diminutive negro. Inky understood and accepted the knife.

"Bol," he said, "ah don't want no pie terday. Yo eat ma piece."

The pie was passed and Bolivar devoured it. All then arose from the table, and Bolivar, after receiving an invitation from Mrs. Anderson to "jes come ergin any ole time," left for the cave, accompanied by Inky. The boys held a consultation and decided that John Lake had not discovered the entrance to their rendezvous. In this, however, they were mistaken, as subsequent events proved. They crawled into the cave and sat down for a little parley.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Say, Bol," said Inky, "what yo' reckon ole man Lake wanted 'round heah? He wus actin' mighty suspicious."

"I dunno, Inky," Bolivar replied, after a moment of thought.

"He knows we got er cave."

"Yes, but I don't b'lieve he knows where it is."

"Mebbe he's gwine ter try to run us out of heah."

"Mebbe! But he can't do it. I'll get Uncle Ezra Fox on our side. He'll help us."

The boys discussed the banker awhile longer and then crawled out of the cave. As they moved away Bolivar asked:

"Inky, where you goin' this evenin'?"

"No place."

"How 'bout playin' a little tick-tack?"

"Fine!"

"All right, we'll do it. I'll get Skeets an' one or two of the other boys an' we'll have some fun."

On his way home Bolivar discovered



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Skeets undergoing punishment for the church episode. He was a prisoner in the yard of his home by edict of his father. Bolivar told Skeets of the plan for tick-tack and the latter agreed to slip away after supper and join the others in the prank. The Square was agreed on as the meeting place.

"I'll be there," said Skeets. "This here jail sentence only lasts until six o'clock."

Little did the boys suspect that events were to transpire that night that would have a bearing on the lives of several people, among them the stranger and Millie Brewster.



## IX

**B**OLIVAR arrived at home about four o'clock. When he entered the sitting room he found his father reading a newspaper and Kit deeply engrossed in a book which he closed with a bang as he saw his brother. Bolivar was surprised and disturbed to find his father at home. Usually Doctor and Mrs. Brown went for a drive on Sunday afternoons. Nevertheless, the boy put on a bold front and started for the stairs, hoping to escape his parents' notice.

He might have escaped had it not been for Kit. The younger brother knew Bolivar had at least a lecture coming, and he yearned to witness his discomfort. To attract his father's attention to Bolivar, therefore, Kit said, "Hello, Bol!" and settled back in his chair to view the proceedings. Kit had not forgotten the pie



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affair. Doctor Brown lowered his paper and brought Bolivar to a standstill with a look.

"Bolivar," he began, "I am ashamed of you—thoroughly ashamed of you. Such actions in church are absolutely inexcusable. You have actually insulted the pastor and the entire congregation. I—"

"How 'bout Miss Chase?" interrupted Kit, his eyes aglow with keen enjoyment.

"Enough, Christopher!" said Doctor Brown, sternly. Then he continued to Bolivar: "You must apologize to both Doctor Beggs and Miss Chase. Do you understand?"

Bolivar nodded.

"That is all. But stay! Here is your show money."

Doctor Brown gave Bolivar the money and the boy disappeared upstairs with a desire for revenge on his brother rankling in his heart. Kit grinned and chuckled in glee.

Once in his room, Bolivar went to the bureau and took from a drawer a ball of



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white twine and a smaller roll of hemp cord. These he placed on the bed while he hunted for a nail to use in making the tick-tack.

A tick-tack, such as Missouri boys use to torment their neighbors, is a contrivance by which they make a nail, or other small hard object, strike against a window pane or shutter by pulling a string from a hiding place near by. Bolivar located the nail in Kit's drawer and sat down on the bed to rig up the contrivance.

As he worked away Bolivar's thoughts turned to Kit and the mean way the latter had acted a few minutes before. He tried to invent some scheme for revenge and finally hit on one. Stepping to the door he called:

"Oh, Kit!"

"What you want?" came the reply.

"Come up a minute. Want to see you."

Kit closed his book and quickly ascended the stairs.

"How'd you like to have some fun to-night?" asked Bolivar.

"That 'u'd be great."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"We're goin' to play tick-tack. Want to go along?"

"You bet! Who you goin' to skeer?"

"Oh, Miss Ann Eliza Chase, I guess, an' most likely ole man Lake. Be at the corner of the Square at eight-thirty."

"I sure will. Thanks, Bol!" And, whistling a tune, Kit returned to the sitting room and resumed the reading of his book.

Bolivar met Skeets in front of the Wilson home about seven o'clock. As they examined the tick-tack apparatus they formed their plans for the evening's proceedings. It was decided that the peace of Miss Chase should be disturbed first, after which Banker Lake's residence should be the scene of action. The mention of Mr. Lake's name reminded Skeets of something he had intended to tell Bolivar.

"Say, Bol," he said, "a stranger come up to our fence to-day while I was a prisoner an' asked me where Mr. Lake lived."

"Did he give any reason for wantin' to know?"



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"No. I showed him the Lake house an' he thanked me an' went away. The funny part was, he didn't go toward Lake's, but walked up past Inky's house an' on south, out of town, I guess."

"That's funny," was Bolivar's comment. "Why didn't you holler an' tell him he was goin' the wrong way, just to see what he'd say?"

"I did. He said he didn't want to see Mr. Lake just then, but would take a walk an' come back later. That was about five o'clock. I forgot to tell you before."

"Must be some feller who wants to borrow money," said Bolivar. "He acted sort o' queer, though."

"He sure did. What you reckon he wanted of Lake, providin' he didn't want to borrow money? People don't ginrully borrow money on Sunday."

"From your story he didn't act like he wanted to see him."

"Well, anyway, he wanted to see the



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house, an' he wasn't out sightseein', neither. I don't understand it all."

"Me neither!"

Bolivar did not mention his previous meetings with a stranger, but he concluded the two men were one and the same. He felt that an explanation of the man's actions would come some day; since the visitor had treated him with the utmost consideration, he resolved not to start gossip about him.

It had grown dark enough for the boys to think of moving on their prey, and Bolivar and Skeets went to the corner of the Square. There they found Kit, enthusiastic over the fun in prospect, and it wasn't long until Inky came up.

Next to the home of Ann Eliza Chase was a vacant lot covered with high weeds. To this the four boys went. In the weeds they found a hiding place where they would be screened from the view of people passing along the sidewalk. Arriving at the lot, Skeets asked:



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Who's goin' to be the fixers, Bol?"

"Let me an' Kit fix this one an' you an' Inky can fix the one on Lake's house."

It was thus arranged and, as Bolivar and Kit crept toward Miss Chase's window an idea flashed across the mind of the former. He had originally intended to gain revenge on Kit by tying him to Miss Chase's front door, attracting her attention and running, but he changed his mind and resolved to use another method. At the corner of the house he waited for Kit, who was a couple of yards in the rear.

"Kit," he said, "I just been figgerin'. Had we better put it on here or 'round at the side winder?"

"Whatever you think," replied Kit.

"Well, I reckon 'round at the side would be better. You stay here an' I'll go fix it. Loan me your hat."

"What for?"

"I want it to wave at the fellers. They can see a straw hat fine—much better 'n my cap."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

Without further ado Kit handed his new straw hat over to his brother, who then crept around the house. All was still for a brief period, during which Kit waited uneasily for the return of Bolivar. The younger boy was on the verge of returning to the weeds without his brother when Bolivar came running around the house.

"Hi, Kit!" he whispered. "Run! Here she comes!"

Sure enough! The front door flew open and Miss Chase, broom in hand, emerged. The boys ran to the weeds while the old maid hurried around to the side window. Reaching the hiding place, Bolivar and Kit dropped beside Inky and Skeets.

"What 'd you do to get her out?" asked Skeets.

"Darn it! I must 'a' slipped ag'i'n the winder. Gee! but that was a narrow escape!"

The boys watched Miss Chase in the light coming from the window. Suddenly



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Kit remembered his hat and asked Bolivar for it.

"My head feels funny without it," he explained.

"Your hat?" exclaimed Bolivar, feigning surprise and agitation. "Why, blamed if I didn't drop it! We'll have to go back after it."

"Where'd you drop it?" asked Kit.

"Right under the winder."

"Yo'all ain't gwine ter git no hat back ter-night," said Inky. "Miss Chase done got it, sho."

The old maid had returned to the house and Bolivar and Kit again crept forward. A careful search failed to locate the hat, and they soon returned to the weeds.

"What am I goin' to do, Bol?" asked Kit. "That's my new straw."

"Here, wear my cap."

Kit took the cap and started away. "Where you goin'?" asked Skeets.

"Home!"

"What for?"



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"I got plenty for to-night." And Kit continued on his way in rather a doubtful state of mind.

"Don't stop him," whispered Bolivar. Then aloud: "Come on, fellers! Now for Lake's home!"

Bolivar didn't mind his bareheaded state. On the contrary, he was glad of it, for, though Kit had his cap, Miss Chase had Kit's straw hat, and he knew she would ascertain whose it was. She could readily do that, since the hat bore the mark of Hezekiah Pickwick's store and he could easily tell to whom it was sold. Bolivar grinned as he felt he would be fully revenged on Kit for the latter's treatment of him.

"Say, Bol," asked Skeets as the boys walked toward the Lake residence, "what did you have his hat for?"

"Flies was bad!" chuckled Bolivar.

"How come yo' ter drap it?" asked Inky.

"Reckon it must 'a' slipped from my grip."



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"Ah done figgahed it out diff runt," said Inky. "Yo' drapped dat hat on pu'pus."

"Well," confessed Bolivar, "Kit ain't been treatin' me exactly right an' proper lately, an' I figgered I'd have to break even with him."

"You sho has did it," came from the little negro. "Miss Chase ull get him to-morrer an' mebbe ter-night."

"Well," said Skeets, "if he deserved it he should 'a' got it. Bol prob'ly never give him more 'n he should 'a' had. Won't he squeal on us, Bol?"

"Can't, can he? He was in it, too."

"That's so, but he might tell, anyway."

It wasn't far to the Lake home and in a short time the boys were there. They sat down on the sidewalk to confer as to the best way to work the tick-tack. The house, considered the town's finest, was built after the style of the old Southern plantation home. It was a square, white, two-story structure with a wide veranda on three sides. From the roof of the porch



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hung vines which attached themselves to the pillars and formed a network around the veranda. These, the boys agreed, would be in their way, so it was arranged to put the tick-tack on the back window where it could be worked from the barn. Skeets was selected to be "fixer," and the boys made their way noiselessly to the stable. The moon was shining brightly, making it almost as light as day, and the square house stood out like a big, white tombstone.

At the door of the barn the trio stopped. Skeets took the end of the string and crept toward the house. Inky and Bolivar entered the stable and paid out the twine. On account of the moonlight, Skeets was very careful. He dodged from bush to bush and finally to a tree, a large oak, twenty feet from the house. There he paused to listen for sounds that might indicate he had been discovered. Hearing none, he crept on. Suddenly he was brought to a halt by the appearance of a light in the kitchen. It was not the steady glare of a



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lamp; it was a flickering light such as the flame of a match might make.

Skeets looked on the light with suspicion and started back to the barn to await developments. At that juncture there was a rattle from the latch on the kitchen door and he broke into a run. As he sprang through the barn door two men came out of the kitchen.

At first the boys could not see their faces plainly enough to recognize them, but as they drew nearer it was seen that one who was smoking a cigar was John Lake. The other was recognized by both Skeets and Bolivar. He was the stranger each had come in contact with. The two men continued on their way toward the barn and the boys looked for an avenue of escape.

"We can't get out," whispered Bolivar. "Come on—foller me!"

Bolivar sprang lightly up the perpendicular ladder into the hayloft and Skeets and Inky followed. All three lay down on the floor with their heads just far enough



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over the hole to give them a clear view of the barn below. The men stepped through the door and leaned against the side of a stall. Continuing a conversation evidently begun before they left the house, the stranger said:

"John, it's mine rightfully and you know it."

"I don't know anything of the kind," returned the banker. "Jim, you have no right to come here and demand money from me. You know I offered you a hundred in St. Joe and what did you try to do? You tried to kill me."

"I tried to kill you," said the stranger, in a surprised tone. "Oh, I did, did I? You didn't attempt to pull your gun on me, did you?"

"Oh, well, I didn't intend to shoot you. You know that."

"I didn't know it. And when I knocked you down you told the police you had been assaulted."

"I didn't give them your name."



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"No, of course you didn't. You knew that if I was arrested I might tell them too much about you."

"Well, Jim," said the banker, in a tone of pacification, "let's not talk that way. Brothers shouldn't quarrel."

"All right! I didn't get hurt in the St. Joe fight. I'm willing to forget it. But I want my money."

"You have no right to any."

"Let's reckon back a bit, John. How long was I in the penitentiary?"

"Ten years, wasn't it?"

"About that. Why did I go there?"

"Oh, come now, Jim!" said the banker, exasperated. "Don't ring in that old story."

"Yes, I will ring it in, too. I went there for what was called fraudulent banking. You didn't go because I took the blame—a blame that wasn't mine to the slightest degree. I served the sentence and you were exonerated. Mother died seven years ago and left at least four thousand dollars to



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you and me. She knew I had committed no crime. She also knew you thought you could win when you speculated with that fifty thousand dollars. She wrote me about her money four days before she died. Now, John, you may have the interest, but I want my two thousand."

"I've got no two thousand for you. What made you come to this town, anyway?"

"I want my money and I'm going to get it. Then I'm going away."

"I thought possibly you came here to see Millie."

"I did and I have seen her. She never knew where I was."

"So you've seen her, eh?" mused the banker. Then he hardened his tone.

"Jim," he said, "you'll get no two thousand out of me. If you don't get out of town I'll tell Millie about your penitentiary record."

The stranger laughed quietly. "I've done that, John," he said.

"And she still cares?"



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The stranger shook his head slowly.  
“No, she has cast me out of her life.”

“What did you tell her for?”

“It was only fair that she know.”

“Fair? Humph! You’re too honest, Jim.”  
The banker drew a bill from his pocket and offered it to his brother. “Here’s a twenty for you, Jim,” he said. “Take it and light out.”

The other man did not reply for a moment and the silence seemed intense to the boys. When he did speak it was in a tone of determination.

“John Lake,” he said, “you’re a contemptible sneak. It may not be too late to let you see the inside of a penitentiary. A man who will beat his own brother out of money left him by his dead mother deserves a prison cell.”

“So you think it isn’t too late?” sneered the banker.

“That’s what I do and, mark my words, to-morrow you may not be so willing to turn me down.”



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"What will you do?"

"I could swear you accepted poor old Mrs. Link's one thousand dollars deposit after you knew the bank had gone higher than a kite."

"Pooh, Jim! You're talking nonsense. What effect would the sworn statement of an ex-convict have on the reputation of a reputable banker like myself? People would laugh at you. You'd better take this twenty and go. It's all I've got for you."

And again the banker offered the bill.



## X

THE stranger walked to the door and looked toward the house. Returning to the banker's side, he said, in a modulated tone:

"John, you have a fine home."

"Pretty fair!" replied Mr. Lake, complacently.

"You have a fortune."

"Yes, I'm pretty well fixed."

"You married Helen Bailey."

"Yes."

"She knows about me and believes me guilty, I presume."

"Yes, but don't worry about that. She won't ever mention it."

The stranger was silent. Evidently he was dreaming of other days.

"Any children?" he finally asked.



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"One—a girl."

Another pause and then the stranger said, firmly, "John, suppose Helen and the little girl should hear the truth about our case?"

"They wouldn't believe it."

"Well, suppose Helen should learn the truth about the disappearance of old man Kane, who had all that money in your bank?"

The words were hardly out of the stranger's mouth before the banker almost shrieked: "What! Would you accuse me of foul play? Jim Lake, I'll kill you for that."

He sprang on his brother and a terrific fight for life followed.

The banker was strong and active and he fought like a madman. The stranger was no weakling and the battle was an even one for a minute or more. John Lake was the larger, but he did not possess the staying powers, and after a brief session he began to tire. Soon the brothers went down, with



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the stranger on top. One of his hands clutched the banker's throat, while the other held John Lake's right hand, in which was a large clasp knife, open.

Not a word had passed between the boys since the men entered the barn. Their excitement during the struggle was intense, however, and when they saw the stranger had the better of the encounter Bolivar whispered:

"Good!"

"Now, John," said the stranger between breaths, "you villain, you! Drop that knife or I'll choke you to death."

The banker's fingers loosened and the weapon rolled from his hand. His brother snatched it, closed the blade, and dropped the knife in his pocket. The stranger then relaxed his grip on his brother's throat somewhat and said:

"John, I've got you—got you by the throat. I've got you so that I could kill you if I cared to, just as you wanted to kill me with that knife. Now, under the



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circumstances, don't you think you'd better come clean and give me my two thousand?"

"I guess you have got me, Jim," replied the banker. "Penitentiary life must have strengthened you. You fight like a tiger. But, Jim, now be sensible. You know I have no thousand for you. I tell you what I'll do. You leave town to-morrow morning and I'll give you a hundred."

"Not on your life. You're in no position to dictate. I want my money—the full amount—and I won't take one cent less. Now, decide what you're going to do quickly, as an ex-convict is apt to get nervous and do something rash. What do you say?"

John Lake had nothing to say for a moment. Then he replied, "Jim, you get the money on one condition."

"What is it?"

"That you help me out in a little deal I have on."

"What kind of a deal?"





“YOU VILLAIN, YOU! DROP THAT KNIFE OR I’LL CHOKE YOU TO DEATH ”







## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Just a business transaction. Nothing dishonest about it."

"If it is merely that I'll do it. But before I let you up, John, answer this, Is the money rightfully mine?"

"I suppose so!" And the stranger permitted his brother to get up. When John Lake had brushed his clothes he said, "Jim, about that Kane disappearance, I—"

"Forget it, John!" said the stranger. "Treat me right and we'll drop the matter forever."

"I'll do it."

Something besides the fear of death evidently had helped change the banker's attitude toward his brother. His manner was now extremely friendly.

"You see, Jim," he said, "there's a piece of land I want to buy and I want it cheap. It is valuable to me, but not to the present owners. The deal I mentioned concerns this land. I want you to buy it for me. If I went after it myself it would cause



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talk, and in the end cost me a lot more than you could buy it for."

"I see."

"I'll pay you the two thousand to-night, and to-morrow you buy the land for me as Mr. Locke. Is it a go?"

"Sure!" And the two men stepped through the door and moved toward the house.

The boys waited in the hayloft until they heard the kitchen door close, and then quietly slipped down the ladder and out of the barn. *Via* the alley they started for the corner of the Square.

"Fellers," said Bolivar as they sat down on the sidewalk, "that was mighty peculiar doin's to me. I ain't quite clear on it yet."

"I was mighty glad to see that feller get the tumble on Lake," said Skeets. "Gee! but he did some scrappin'!"

"He sho did," said Inky.

"How 'bout that penitentiary talk, Bol?" said Skeets.

"That stranger's been in the pen," re-



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plied Bolivar, "an, 'cordin' to his line of talk, Mr. Lake should 'a' been there, instid of him."

"What ground do you s'pose he wants to buy?" came from Skeets.

"Dunno!" Then a thought struck Bolivar. "Say, Inky," he continued, "you 'member how Mr. Lake was prowlin' 'round the cave?"

"Mabbe he wants the land 'round there."

"What for? It ain't no 'count," said Skeets.

That was a poser. "Well, fellers," said Bolivar. "I think we got wise to a little too much to-night. Le's all promise that mum's the word for a while."

The boys promised and started for their homes. After they had separated Bolivar walked slowly along, turning over in his mind the happenings of the evening. He decided that the banker was a scoundrel and that the stranger, although an ex-convict, was a square man. He also decided he was glad the banker had come out



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second best in the struggle. In fact, the boy saw in the ex-convict much he admired.

Bolivar wondered if the surmise about the banker's desire to get hold of the land in the vicinity of the cave was correct.

"I got a hunch it is," he murmured to himself. "But why he should want it I can't understand. I think I'll ask Uncle Ezra Fox what he thinks. He can keep a secret."

On reaching his home Bolivar went to the barn and set a couple of steel traps for an animal, supposed to be a weasel, that had been killing his mother's chickens. After that he crept in the back way and slipped quietly up the stairs to his room. Kit already was in bed and asleep. Bolivar took his place beside him and knew nothing more until awakened by his brother in the morning as Kit answered the call of their mother.

At the sound of Mrs. Brown's voice Kit sprang out of bed, and was half dressed before Bolivar was fully awake. By the



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time the older lad had begun to pull on his clothes Kit was ready to descend the stairs. Suddenly the latter saw a white straw hat on a chair and, picking it up, he examined it. A smile spread over his face as he said:

“Why, Bol, here’s my hat. Where did you find it?”

Bolivar was surprised. “Where’s your hat?” he asked.

“Here!”

“Get out! That’s mine. Leave it be!” And Bolivar went on dressing.

“It is not yours. Look at it.”

When Doctor Brown purchased hats for the boys he usually bought two of the same kind. Such had been the case a week before. The hats looked exactly alike. Bolivar examined the one Kit handed him and decided there was something wrong. In the crown could be seen plainly the two initials, “C. B.,” while in his own hat he had pasted his full name.

“Now, ain’t that mine?” demanded Kit.

“Well, where’s mine?” demanded Boli-



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var, fiercely. "This one looks like yours, but what did you do with mine?"

"I 'ain't got it. Never had it."

"Did you go to Miss Chase's house last night an' get yours?"

"No, I never went near her house after she come out."

"Then whose hat did you wear last night?"

"Guess I must 'a' made a mistake an' wore yours."

"Aw, you chump! Can't you reckernize your own clothes? Now Miss Chase has got my hat instid of yours."

"I guess yer right, Bol. Golly! won't she give it to you when she ketches you?" And Kit, starting for the door, cast a broad smile in Bolivar's direction.

The smile was more than Bolivar could stand and he helped his brother out of the room with his foot.

Bolivar completed the work of dressing and went downstairs to breakfast. All the family had eaten but Kit and himself and



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he was glad of it, since he was not in the humor to be pleasant. As he was finishing his oatmeal Mrs. Brown entered the room with a white straw hat. She placed it on a chair and cast a look of stern meaning at Bolivar.

"Here's your hat, my son," she said. "Miss Chase sent it over to your father. He left word for you to go and beg her pardon this morning for your conduct last night, and also for the disturbance you caused in church. That is all."

Mrs. Brown then left the room. Bolivar knew his father meant every word of his order and that to disobey would bring severe punishment. Unpleasant though it might be, he resolved to call on the old maid and say something in the way of an apology, but he would not go alone. He would persuade Skeets and Inky to accompany him. With their aid he was confident he could fix up an apology that would soothe Miss Chase's injured feelings and possibly place all three in her good graces. After break-



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fast he went down the street seeking his two pals. He found them behind the old blacksmith shop playing marbles.

"Where you bound for, Bol?" asked Skeets.

"Jist down the street a coupla blocks. You an' Inky come on with me."

The other boys concluded their game and started away with Bolivar.

"Gwine swimmin'?" asked Inky.

"Nope!" replied Bolivar. "Wisht I was."

"Where you goin'?" asked Skeets.

"Down to Miss Chase's."

"Golly! What for—to get Kit's hat?"

"Nope! Goin' to make her a talk 'bout bein' sorry for what we did last night. You see, Kit had my hat on instid of his, an' Miss Chase sent it home to-day. I got the blame that oughta been Kit's for losin' the hat."

"For you losin' it for him," chuckled Skeets.

"Oh, well, what's the difference? Gotta 'pologize. Goin' with me?"



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Both boys agreed to go. They saw an amusing situation ahead. At the gate of the Chase home Bolivar instructed his companions to let him do most of the talking, and then they went to the front door and knocked.

Miss Chase opened the door. On seeing the boys she said, "Well!" and settled back, leaning on her broom, to hear what they had to say. She knew what was coming and was prepared to enjoy it thoroughly. Bolivar, hat in hand, opened the conversation.

"Good mornin', Miss Chase," he said. "We got somethin' to 'xplain to you."

Again the old maid said, "Well!"

"You see," the boy continued, "last night us three fellers made a bad mistake. Didn't we, boys?"

The other two nodded. Bolivar shifted his weight from one leg to the other. "You see," he went on, "we never thought you was alone when we tried to put that tick-tack on your winder. We thought the



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sewin' circle was with you or else we never would 'a' tried to skeer you. We don't go 'round skeerin' young ladies when they're alone."

The old maid's stern expression relaxed with the last sentence. With a smile that surprised her callers, she said: "Well, boys, I guess you didn't mean any harm. I'll let you off this time. But what made you think I had the sewin' circle here?"

"Bol, didn't yer mother say it wus Miss Chase's turn?" asked Skeets.

"Oh, goodness, no!" said Miss Chase before Bolivar could reply. "Last night wasn't meetin' night. We don't meet on Sunday. It's Mrs. Taylor's turn next an' I know they expect me to come, but I simply hate to hear people gossiped about. Honestly, Mrs. Taylor is—" But right there Miss Chase caught herself and stopped. "Well, never mind about her," she said. "Wait a minute and I'll fetch you some cake."

The old maid disappeared in the house,



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returning soon with three large pieces of coconut cake which she distributed among the boys. Bolivar next brought up the subject of the disturbance in the church.

"Oh, by the way, Miss Chase," he said, "'bout that mistake I made in church. I never—"

"Never mind that!" interrupted the spinster, and with a primly sweet, "Good-by, boys!" she stepped back into the house and closed the door. As the youngsters walked slowly along the street munching cake, Inky congratulated Bolivar on his diplomacy.

"Bol," he said, "yo' suttinly done dat fine. Le's tick-tack huh ergin ter-night an' git some mo' cake."

"All women can be handled if you call 'em young er pretty," came from Bolivar. "Naw, we won't tick-tack her for a week, anyway."

Suddenly Bolivar thought of something else he wanted to talk about. "Say, fellers," he said, "I met the new section



## BOLIVAR BROWN

foreman's son a while ago an' he's goin' to sell us the giant powder we need for blastin' out the cave. We'll do the work some day this week."

That afternoon Bolivar wrote a note to the preacher, apologizing for the disturbance he had caused in the church. He mailed it. It read as follows:

DEAR REVRIND BEGGS:

I am sorry that I got fresh in church Sunday. I will cut it out in the future if I have to come to church.

BOL BROWN.



## XI

TWO days after the apology to Miss Chase the boys took up the matter of blasting out the cave. The section foreman's son had sold Bolivar the powder, and it had been buried in a tin box near the cave. Bolivar had seen men blast in the rock quarry near town and felt confident he could handle the powder properly at the cave. Nevertheless he resolved to make sure that the boys all got far enough from the explosion to be safe. It required fifteen minutes of his time to round up Skeets, Inky, Bill, and Scrawney, and the four set out for the cave. Turning a corner a moment later, they ran into the stranger. He was walking along, striking at weeds with a stick. On seeing the boys he stopped, with a pleasant "Good morning!"



## BOLIVAR BROWN

The three boys who had witnessed the fight were interested immediately. They stopped, and Bolivar returned the man's salutation. After a trivial remark about the weather, the stranger asked where they were going. Without hesitation Bolivar replied that they were going to their cave on the river bank.

"May I go along?" the man asked.

"Sure!" An idea had come to Bolivar. "Do you know anything 'bout blastin', Mr. ——?"

"Locke is my name. Don't know that I understand blasting any too well, but I dare say I could fire a blast. Why?"

"We're goin' to make our cave larger to-day by blastin' out some of the rock an' dirt an' I thought mebbe you could tell us 'bout how much powder to use."

"I think I can show you something about it. What kind of an explosive have you?"

"Giant powder! Bought it with money we earned givin' a show. It's hid near the cave."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Have you enough?"

"The feller I bought it frum told me his father said it was enough to blow up the state penitentiary."

From the corner of his eye Bolivar thought he saw Locke start slightly at the mention of the word "penitentiary." However, the man replied, quietly: "Then we must be careful in handling it. Giant powder is dangerous."

After a walk of two blocks the stranger, pointing with his stick, said: "There's your cave. Quite a place for one, isn't it?"

Bolivar was greatly surprised. How did Locke know where the cave was. He thought he'd find out, if possible.

"Where, Mr. Locke?" he asked.

"Where we see those boughs, isn't it?"

"How did you know that was it?"

"Just guessed it. I was in this town some years ago and it is possible I may have heard of the cave."

The explanation wasn't satisfactory, but Bolivar asked no more questions. At the



## BOLIVAR BROWN

mouth of the cave all waited while Bolivar, with the aid of a broken shovel, unearthed the box containing the explosive. They were about to enter the cave when John Lake, the banker, appeared on the scene.

"How do you do, Mr. Locke!" he said to the stranger. "What's going on?"

The stranger shook hands with the banker. "We're out here for a purpose which I presume this young man will explain if he wants you to know," he replied, as he placed a hand on Bolivar's shoulder.

The banker, much to their surprise, smiled and bowed to the boys. Bolivar decided that, inasmuch as Mr. Lake had caught them with the mouth of the cave uncovered, he might as well explain.

"This is our cave, Mr. Lake," he said. "We're goin' to blast it out to make it larger."

"Is that so?" came from the banker, evidently keenly interested. "I'd like to see it done. May I?"

"Yes, sir, if you want to."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Thank you! I'm going over the hill a moment to see my rock quarry. If you'll defer the blasting five or ten minutes I'll be back."

This would be done, Bolivar said, and the banker strolled away. The rock quarry was about a block from the cave. Locke and the boys entered the rendezvous, the man exhibiting much interest in what he saw.

"Boys," he said, "you have a nice place here. It's furnished in great shape." Settling back in a chair with his hands clasped over one knee, he continued: "This cave is not wholly unknown to me. Would you like to hear a story in which it figures?"

Bolivar said a story would be fine, and the boys were all attention immediately.

"Some years ago, boys," Locke began, "there was a man living in a town less than two hundred miles from this one who was not always honest. He made money often by schemes that were off color and he became wealthy. He was not especially popu-



## BOLIVAR BROWN

lar, but his money made him powerful and most of his fellow townspeople were in awe of him, especially those who owed him. For years he prospered, and then reverses in business came. He lost all his money but a few thousand dollars through bad speculations and was one day compelled to begin all over again. His few thousand dollars were enough for an honest start, but he was impatient and yearned for more capital. He knew somebody who had money and induced that person to let him have charge of it. It was deposited in the dishonest man's bank.

“This man had a brother, a lad of eighteen or thereabouts, a sort of green boy who, although his home training had been good, had always been reckless and carefree. To this youth the dishonest man unfolded a plan to use the newly acquired money. He succeeded, through false promises, in obtaining the younger brother's aid in a scheme of speculation. The scheme was in reality a crime the enormity of which did



## BOLIVAR BROWN

not dawn on the youth when he promised to help. It had not proceeded far, however, when the boy saw through it and declined to go farther. At the last moment the dishonest brother went it alone.

"The scheme failed, but the dishonest brother left evidence that tended to show the younger man was responsible for the crime. For reasons best known to himself the young fellow fled, and one night he hid in this cave. He was captured and served a term in the penitentiary. I knew him well—and that is how I happen to know about it."

Locke stopped talking and Inky asked how the dishonest brother had managed to come through scot free.

"Merely because the lad didn't tell on him," said Locke.

Bolivar glanced at Skeets, but the latter was hard at work digging a hole in the soft earth with his toe. Inky had nothing further to say and the other boys did not venture any comments.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

Having finished his story, Locke asked Bolivar for a look at the giant powder. Several sticks and a piece of fuse were shown him and he pronounced them in good condition, so far as he knew. A rusty pick was brought into play and each of the boys took a turn at drilling a hole for the charge. Locke finally asked for the pick and finished the job. Locke then set the charge, attaching a piece of fuse to each stick and connecting them all up with a longer section of the fuse.

The charge all set, the boys removed the furnishings from the cave. Bolivar then announced all was in readiness.

"But," he said to Locke, "we told Mr. Lake we'd wait for him, so we better keep our word."

Locke agreed, and all sat down outside the cave to wait. The banker's affability and his apparent interest in their plans were still in the minds of the boys. They would not have been surprised to see an officer of the law sent by Mr. Lake appear and order



## BOLIVAR BROWN

them not to blast. The banker had never been friendly toward them, and his change in attitude made them suspicious that something besides curiosity had prompted him to seek permission to witness the blast.

Mr. Lake returned promptly and Locke told the banker and the boys to retire to a point about two hundred feet from the cave. They did as he suggested, and the stranger went into the cave and touched a match to the fuse. A moment later he emerged and ran to the group. He said it would require about a minute's time for the fuse to burn to the powder. At the end of that period, however, nothing had occurred. Five minutes more passed and still there was no explosion. When Locke's watch showed ten minutes had elapsed the watchers advanced cautiously to investigate. Near the opening the banker called a halt.

"Mr. Locke," he said, "I don't believe you lighted that fuse properly. I'll give it another light."

"Better let me do it."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"No, I'll light it. I'm used to seeing blasts fired over at the quarry."

The banker stooped low and started into the cave. He stopped once to investigate and then continued until he was out of sight in the cave. Locke was about to follow when a cry from the interior of the cave stopped him. This was followed immediately by a loud rumbling report. The giant powder had exploded.



## XII

AS the boys and Locke instinctively moved toward the cave, after the explosion, Mr. Lake struggled through the opening and fell to the ground, bleeding from several cuts on the head. Bolivar and Locke raised him to a sitting posture.

"The powder must have been damp," he gasped. "I should have been more careful. Give me water!"

Inky ran for water, and the banker swooned. By the time the negro boy had returned with the water Locke and the other boys had placed the injured man on a bed of boughs. Locke threw water in the banker's face and he revived and drank. Locke then sent Scrawney to notify Doctor Dalton and to have the town hack come and convey Mr. Lake to his home. Bolivar and



## BOLIVAR BROWN

the stranger bathed the injured man's head and made him as comfortable as possible. The water served to strengthen him slightly and he was able to talk.

"Jim," he said, addressing Locke, "I guess I'm done for. I'm mighty sorry, Jim, for it all. You've been a man all the way through. I've been a coward."

Here the banker's voice grew husky and he was compelled to stop.

"Don't let the past worry you, John," replied Locke. "It's all over now. You know we agreed to let bygones be bygones."

"I know, Jim, but I've treated you badly. I'm going to set myself right this far." The banker turned his head and asked Bolivar, who had retired a few paces, to approach.

"My boy," he began, "I am hurt internally and I know I'm done for. I want to tell you something. This Mr. Locke is my brother. Locke isn't his name. He is James Lake. I owe him four thousand



## BOLIVAR BROWN

Reaching the Lake property, he climbed the fence (no country-town boy uses a gate when he can climb a fence) and went to the side door of the house. His knock brought Mrs. Lake. Bolivar had his hat in his hand.

"Here's the watch," he said, offering the timepiece to the widow. "It's purty well water-soaked."

Mrs. Lake was surprised and delighted. "Why, Bolivar," she said, "I had no idea you could recover that watch! How did you do it?"

"I dove fer it."

"I knew Bolivar would find it," said Katie, coming up from behind. "Mamma, Bolivar can do almost anything."

Bolivar felt like a king. Katie was praising him; he could ask for nothing sweeter in the whole world. Yet he kept himself in good control. All he did to indicate that he was pleased was to rip a piece of the band from his hat and kick a bug off the porch.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"No one is responsible for this," Mr. Lake whispered to the physician. "It was my own fault."

The doctor went to his buggy for his medicine case. When he returned the injured man was dead.

Doctor Dalton and Locke lifted the body into the hack and it was taken to the Lake home. Doctor Dalton was the coroner, and before leaving the scene he told the boys he might hold an inquest; in case he did, he said, they would be wanted as witnesses. Locke accompanied the doctor to the Lake home and broke the news to Mrs. Lake.

The news of the banker's death spread like wildfire all over the county. Hundreds of people visited the scene of the accident and then gathered in groups about the Square to discuss it. Dozens asked the boys to describe the distressing affair, but they were too deeply awed to talk. They decided home was the place for them and that was where they headed for without



## BOLIVAR BROWN

delay. As Bolivar and Skeets parted the former said:

"I'm sorry for him, Skeets. He wasn't such a bad one, after all."

"I'm sorry, too," replied Skeets. "Wish't we'd 'a' never had a cave."

Bolivar told his parents frankly all about the accident and remained at home for the rest of the day.

The banker's death was the one topic of conversation in Paw Paw Corner for a week. When it became known that the stranger was a brother of the dead man people wondered why it had not come out before. The stranger remained at the Lake home and assumed a general supervision over the affairs of his brother. The funeral was held on the third day after the accident. All the boys who had been at the cave when the explosion occurred attended with their parents.

The day following the funeral there was a little conference at the Lake home between the stranger, who shall be known as



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"The stranger give it to her," he announced. He then put on his clothes.

"Skeets," he said, "don't you tell none of the boys about me findin' this watch. If you do I'll punch yer head."

"You mean we'll punch each other's heads," said Skeets, with a grin.

Bolivar started toward town.

"Wait a minute!" yelled Skeets. "I'll go with you."

"No, you won't!" replied Bolivar. "I'm going to make a call an' I don't need any help."

Bolivar was elated over his recovery of the watch and was eager to return it to Katie. After his parting shot at Skeets he broke into a dog-trot and covered the distance to Pickwick's store in a brief period. From the store to the Lake residence he walked slowly and in an unconcerned manner. He didn't want to appear eager to see Katie. He wanted it to be as though it were an everyday occurrence for him to recover a watch from the Missouri River.



the bank into the river. Where his feet struck it was but thirty inches deep, but a little distance out was a step-off that would take him over his head. The first thing he did was to wet his hair. This is supposed to ward off colds and keep swimmers from having headache.

"Well, here goes!" he muttered.

Bolivar climbed back onto the bank and jumped in head first. He was under water half a minute. When he came up he tread water to keep his head above and, wiping his eyes with his hand, he swam to shore, using the overhand stroke, the pride of all Missouri River swimmers.

Bolivar had not found the watch on his first trip in. Climbing out on the bank, he measured with his eye about where the timepiece should have struck bottom. Just then Skeets came up.

Without delay Skeets pulled off his clothes, kicked them back from the edge of the bank, and took a header into the water. Bolivar followed him. Skeets came up



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"And good-by!" Replacing the picture in the wallet, he continued his walk.

James Lake found no difficulty in assuming the business duties of his brother. He was fairly well educated and a man of brains. He quietly assured people that the bank would be conducted just as though John Lake were alive, and at the same time he began making preparations to sell the interests out.

"I don't quite understand it all," said Uncle Ezra Fox in Pickwick's store a few days after the funeral. "I don't see why it didn't get noised around that John Lake had a brother here."

"Oh, rats!" said Peleg Lee. "A man don't have to tell his name to everybody he meets. I seen this here feller around. He never tried to hide any more 'n to sign himself 'Locke' on the hotel register, an' I hear he done that so as to be able to s'prise John. The puzzle about it all is what a man like the banker wanted to be hangin' 'round to see a lot o' boys blast fer."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Yes," chimed in Hezekiah Pickwick, "an' 'specially when he used to hate them same boys like p'ison."

"Well, lemme tell you," said Uncle Ezra. "John Lake wusn't nobody's fool. He wusn't hangin' 'round with them boys out of idle curiosity. He didn't give a hoot 'bout blastin', as it ginrully goes, bit he did care 'bout that particular blast."

"Looky here!" came from Peleg. "Ezry, yer a-talkin' in riddles. Quit it, now. If you think you know why John Lake hung 'round with them boys, out with it."

"I didn't say I knowed. They is a difference between thinkin' you know an' knowin' you know. It's this—in the first case you know maybe, an' in the second you know fer sure."

"Are we to figger frum that that you only think you know?" asked Hezekiah.

"You certainly are if you feel like figgerin'," said Uncle Ezra. "They ain't but one man alive who knows for sure what he was a-doin' there."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"That ain't so much. Guess I can get it all right."

"Oh, can you?" cried Katie, clapping her hands. "How will you do it, Bolivar?"

"I got a little plan worked out to get it," said the boy. "You an' yer mother go home an' I'll bring the watch to you before noon."

"Can't we see you get it?"

Bolivar blushed. "I gotta dive fer it," he said. "The water's eight feet deep where the watch went in. The bottom's sandy, though, an' the current in this eddy ain't strong 'nough to take the watch fur from where it hit."

Mrs. Lake took Katie's hand. "Come on, dear," she said. "If Bolivar finds the watch he will bring it to you. I'm afraid he won't be able to recover it, though."

"Bet you a nickel I do," said Bolivar, grinning. Mrs. Lake merely smiled at his confidence.

When Bolivar was sure they were out of sight he quickly undressed and dropped off



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"I knowed it," said Uncle Ezra. "An' I knowed you was the man he fought with. I was sure John Lake was to blame. He had a good heart, but there was a lot of meanness surroundin' it. But le's quit discussin' all those old things. They're bygones an' we'll let 'em be bygones."

Lake thanked the old man for his kindness and promised to be on hand at the meeting Tuesday. As he arose to go he asked:

"Uncle Ezra, why are you so fond of boys?"

The old man stood holding the door open for his visitor's exit. At the question a far-away look stole into his eyes.

"Well," he said, softly, "I had a little boy myself onct. I 'ain't got him now—haven't had him since he was four, but I 'ain't fergot him. He was with me long 'nough to show me the good in boys."

Uncle Ezra's voice dropped into a whisper. "Good-by, Mr. Lake!" he said. Then gently he pushed the younger man into the hall and closed the door.



### XIII

UNCLE EZRA FOX reached his little office over the drug store one morning not long after his tilt with Peleg and Hezekiah in the store, and wrote letters to Bolivar Brown and James Lake. They requested the recipients to call at the Fox office one week from that day, a Tuesday. Bolivar's note asked him to bring along the boys who had been using the cave as a rendezvous.

"Important business will be transacted at ten o'clock," the letter concluded. No other information was contained in it.

"There!" said Uncle Ezra, when he had finished writing, "That's off my mind. Course, I could 'a' told 'em to drop in, but the letters will look more official. Those boys are smart ones an' I'm a-goin' to help 'em. It's only fair they should be let in on



## BOLIVAR BROWN

this. With Lake an' me a-pushin' it, the propersition ought to go."

Having thus assured himself of his own satisfaction over his plan, Uncle Ezra leaned back in his chair, put his feet on his desk, and took a nap. On his way home two hours later he mailed the letters.

Bolivar received his note Wednesday morning. It was so seldom that he received mail that the letter evoked eager interest. He read it quickly and sat down on the sidewalk to think it over. He couldn't fathom the reason for Uncle Ezra's inviting all the boys to his office. Uncle Ezra, however, was their friend, so Bolivar was certain something interesting was headed their way. Bolivar resolved not to tell any of the boys but Skeets and Inky about the letter for several days. He would see that they all were on hand Tuesday, though.

He found Inky on the back porch of the Anderson home, making a kite. Bolivar showed him the letter, and together they speculated on the reason for it.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"I knowed you wasn't a criminal," replied the old man, slowly. "I knowed you was a boy who, if he had been mixed up in a crime, had been led into it. I could see that much in your eye. I 'ain't never turned down a boy that looked right to me yet, an' I ain't never goin' to."

"How did you get rid of the officer?"

"I told him a lie. I said you hadn't been there an' that I never knowed a thing 'bout you. I figgered it the whitest lie a man could tell. I wanted to see you get another chance an' I was sure the Lord did, too. I heard that the officer got you later, but I never could learn where he took you. The first time I seen you since you come back, I knowed you."

"Uncle Ezra," began Lake, "I hope—"

"Don't worry 'bout that," interrupted the old man. "I 'ain't never told a soul 'bout you an' I ain't goin' to. Now, I want to ask you one more thing—did you try to kill John Lake in St. Joe?"

Lake related exactly what had happened.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"All I've got to say is that I intended to do exactly what you propose, providing I could buy the land. My brother, just before he died, told me about the land and suggested that I give the boys a square deal. I'm with you if the youngsters are in on it."

Uncle Ezra did not reply at once. Instead, he scratched a match and lighted his old corncob pipe. After a puff or two he said:

"Lake, I always knowed yer brother had a heart. Then the agreement is as good as made?"

"So far as I am concerned."

"That is what I want to talk about at the meetin' Tuesday. We can organize a kind of a stock company an' then sell out. There ain't big money in it—that is, no great big money—but they 'll be 'nough to fix those boys up with a few hundred each. Now, they's somethin' else I want to talk to you about. Can you guess it this time?"

"I'm afraid not."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Ah reckon she kain't," replied Inky, elated over the cow's predicament. "She sho kain't. Golly!" he exclaimed. "Dat cow kin kick lef'-handed. What we gwine ter do, Bol?"

Bolivar hadn't considered the proposition from the double-kicking angle, but his ingenuity came to his aid immediately.

"We're goin' to fix up that other leg, too," he said.

The cow was led out of the stall again and another ring was put in place. When the time came for further efforts to milk her she found both her hind legs held to the floor by the ropes. The little negro took his seat on the stool again. The cow looked around and tossed her head in a way that made him nervous.

"Bol," he finally said, "ah doan b'lieve ah wants ter milk dis cow. She looks wild ter me."

"Skeered, eh?" retorted Bolivar. "You come hold these ropes. I'll milk her."

Inky took the ropes and Bolivar sat down



## BOLIVAR BROWN

by the cow. She gave him a look, but Bolivar went right ahead and milked.

The cow tried to kick first with her right leg and then with her left, but Inky's weight on the ropes held her. The milking proceeded and the boys were delighted at the cow's discomfort.

"Reckon we oughta hab dis scheme patented," said Inky.

"Gee! don't it tickle you to see her try to kick?"

"It sho do."

The cow's efforts became more violent at this juncture and Inky's feet began to slip.

"Hold her!" yelled Bolivar.

"Ah is," puffed Inky.

With each kick the cow gained a little more leeway for her feet. Finally she became so violent that she toppled over sideways, unable to catch her balance because of the ropes, and landed squarely on Bolivar.

The boy tried to get out of the way, but



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Right you are. How come you to guess it?"

"Why, I've seen you up that way several times since the explosion. I have heard, also, that you bought the surrounding ground."

"That bein' the case, I reckon they ain't much use to talk in riddles. O' course, you know what that explosion showed?"

"Yes. My brother knew what was there, too. He intended to buy that ground."

"So I heard. Well, I didn't buy it because I wanted to make money out of it—for myself. But I do want to make some for a lot o' my friends an' I want you to go in on it an' help me."

"You mean Bolivar Brown and his companions."

"Lake, yer a dandy guesser. That's my idea exactly. I don't mind if you and me make a little money, but I want those boys to get in on it. I'm getting old an' have got aplenty. Yer well fixed enough, I reckon. What do you say?"



## XIV

UNCLE EZRA FOX met James Lake on the street the next day.

"I received your letter, Mr. Fox," said Lake.

"Don't call me that, please," said Uncle Ezra. "I ain't used to it." Lake saw the point.

"All right, Uncle Ezra," he said.

"That's better. Now, 'bout that letter. I wish you'd step into my office a minute or two, if you got the time."

Lake had the time and accompanied Uncle Ezra to the office. Uncle Ezra closed the door, and both men took chairs.

"Don't s'pose you could guess what I want to discuss with you," said the old man.

"My guess is the cave on the river bank," said Lake, promptly.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

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## BOLIVAR BROWN

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"So far as I am concerned."

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"I'm afraid not."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"I hardly thought you could. I've got gray since it happened an' my beard has growed."

Lake didn't understand what the old man was driving at. A moment later, however, he started slightly in his chair when Uncle Ezra said:

"You was here some years ago, wasn't you?"

"I was. Why?" came from Lake.

"Do you recollect one night a pore, hungry young feller went to a kitchen door in this town 'bout eight o'clock an' asked for a bit to eat?" Lake coughed and was about to reply.

"Wait now!" said Uncle Ezra, quickly. "I ain't near through yet. It was you, all right. You recollect how you was given some food from an old cupboard? Then do you recollect how, when you'd quit eatin', there come a knock at the door an' a man who said he was a officer of the law tried to get some information 'bout a young feller who was wanted for peculiar bank dealin'?"



## BOLIVAR BROWN

Lake had leaned forward with his hands on his knees. Two big tears came slowly down his cheeks.

"Do I?" he said, his voice slightly choked with emotion. "I should say I do. It was you who helped me, Uncle Ezra. It was you—I know you now. Often since I've been here I've wondered where that little house stood and who that man was. He had the biggest heart I ever knew a human to have. It was you, Uncle Ezra, and that heart is still there, bigger than ever."

Here the younger man covered his face with his hands and remained silent a moment.

"But that's not all I recollect," he went on. "I see in my mind right now that man handing me three ten-dollar bills. I hear him telling me where the cave—the same one we have been discussing—was. I see him letting me out the back door and I hear him saying: 'Good-by, young fellow. God bless you!' Uncle Ezra, let me ask you, why did you do it for me? Why?"



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"I knowed you wasn't a criminal," replied the old man, slowly. "I knowed you was a boy who, if he had been mixed up in a crime, had been led into it. I could see that much in your eye. I 'ain't never turned down a boy that looked right to me yet, an' I ain't never goin' to."

"How did you get rid of the officer?"

"I told him a lie. I said you hadn't been there an' that I never knowed a thing 'bout you. I figgered it the whitest lie a man could tell. I wanted to see you get another chance an' I was sure the Lord did, too. I heard that the officer got you later, but I never could learn where he took you. The first time I seen you since you come back, I knowed you."

"Uncle Ezra," began Lake, "I hope—"

"Don't worry 'bout that," interrupted the old man. "I 'ain't never told a soul 'bout you an' I ain't goin' to. Now, I want to ask you one more thing—did you try to kill John Lake in St. Joe?"

Lake related exactly what had happened.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"I knowed it," said Uncle Ezra. "An' I knowed you was the man he fought with. I was sure John Lake was to blame. He had a good heart, but there was a lot of meanness surroundin' it. But le's quit discussin' all those old things. They're bygones an' we'll let 'em be bygones."

Lake thanked the old man for his kindness and promised to be on hand at the meeting Tuesday. As he arose to go he asked:

"Uncle Ezra, why are you so fond of boys?"

The old man stood holding the door open for his visitor's exit. At the question a far-away look stole into his eyes.

"Well," he said, softly, "I had a little boy myself onct. I 'ain't got him now—haven't had him since he was four, but I 'ain't fergot him. He was with me long 'nough to show me the good in boys."

Uncle Ezra's voice dropped into a whisper. "Good-by, Mr. Lake!" he said. Then gently he pushed the younger man into the hall and closed the door.



## XV

ON Friday morning Bolivar started for the river to have a swim, expecting to find some of his friends there. Swimming isn't much fun for a boy when he is alone. He likes to have witnesses for his skill. Finding nobody at the stump, as one swimming place was known, Bolivar walked along the bank to the eddy, another place. As he neared this one he saw a woman, dressed in black, and a little girl standing near the water. The little girl procured a stick and tried to poke the water. Drawing near, Bolivar discovered the woman was the widow of Banker Lake and the little girl her daughter. He surmised something was wrong. Had Katie Lake not been there Bolivar would have found it easy to approach the widow and ask what the trouble



## BOLIVAR BROWN

was. But Bolivar liked Katie and was very bashful. So he sat down on the grass fifty feet from them and waited. Soon Katie noticed him.

"Oh, Bolivar!" she called. "Come here, please."

What could he do but respond. Rolling his sleeves down, he approached them, hat in hand.

"Bolivar," said Katie, "I dropped my watch in the river while mamma and I were out walking. I was swinging it by the chain. How can I get it back?"

"That's a pretty hard question for a little boy, isn't it?" said Mrs. Lake, smiling at Bolivar. "I'm afraid you can't answer it."

Bolivar dug his toe into the earth. He was secretly delighted. Here was a chance to perform a service for Katie Lake, the girl he considered the sweetest in the whole world.

"How fur out did it go?" he asked.

"About six feet," responded Mrs. Lake.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"That ain't so much. Guess I can get it all right."

"Oh, can you?" cried Katie, clapping her hands. "How will you do it, Bolivar?"

"I got a little plan worked out to get it," said the boy. "You an' yer mother go home an' I'll bring the watch to you before noon."

"Can't we see you get it?"

Bolivar blushed. "I gotta dive fer it," he said. "The water's eight feet deep where the watch went in. The bottom's sandy, though, an' the current in this eddy ain't strong 'nough to take the watch fur from where it hit."

Mrs. Lake took Katie's hand. "Come on, dear," she said. "If Bolivar finds the watch he will bring it to you. I'm afraid he won't be able to recover it, though."

"Bet you a nickel I do," said Bolivar, grinning. Mrs. Lake merely smiled at his confidence.

When Bolivar was sure they were out of sight he quickly undressed and dropped off



## BOLIVAR BROWN

the bank into the river. Where his feet struck it was but thirty inches deep, but a little distance out was a step-off that would take him over his head. The first thing he did was to wet his hair. This is supposed to ward off colds and keep swimmers from having headache.

"Well, here goes!" he muttered.

Bolivar climbed back onto the bank and jumped in head first. He was under water half a minute. When he came up he tread water to keep his head above and, wiping his eyes with his hand, he swam to shore, using the overhand stroke, the pride of all Missouri River swimmers.

Bolivar had not found the watch on his first trip in. Climbing out on the bank, he measured with his eye about where the timepiece should have struck bottom. Just then Skeets came up.

Without delay Skeets pulled off his clothes, kicked them back from the edge of the bank, and took a header into the water. Bolivar followed him. Skeets came up



## BOLIVAR BROWN

quickly and noticed his pal was still underwater. Half a minute passed and Bolivar had not appeared. Ten seconds later he came up and shook the water from his eyes and ears. Skeets was swimming about slowly.

"What you stayin' under fer, Bol?" he asked.

"Jest fer fun!" Then he changed his mind and decided to tell Skeets the truth. "I'm lookin' fer a watch that was dropped in the water."

"Whose?"

"None of yer business!"

"Come on, Bol! Tell me."

"I will if you'll keep it secret."

"I will."

"It's Katie Lake's. She was out walkin' an' dropped it in here."

Skeets was on the bank by that time. "I'll get it," he yelled. Then he dove. Bolivar made a grab and caught him by one leg. They fell into the water together. They struggled out again and Skeets



## BOLIVAR BROWN

growled: "Darn you! What made you grab me?"

"Don't go huntin' fer that watch," ordered Bolivar. "If you do I'll beat you to death."

Skeets saw the point and grinned. "All right," he said. "Go on an' dive fer it."

Once more Bolivar leaped head foremost into the water. This time he was under only about fifteen seconds. When he reappeared he held a small gold watch in his mouth. He climbed out on the grass and examined it.

"Ain't it a dandy?" he said.

"You bet!"

Bolivar took his shirt and wiped the watch. "'Tain't runnin'," he said, after holding the timepiece to his ear. "I'm goin' to look inside."

He opened the watch and found an inscription which read:

TO KATIE  
From Her Uncle,  
James Lake



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"The stranger give it to her," he announced. He then put on his clothes.

"Skeets," he said, "don't you tell none of the boys about me findin' this watch. If you do I'll punch yer head."

"You mean we'll punch each other's heads," said Skeets, with a grin.

Bolivar started toward town.

"Wait a minute!" yelled Skeets. "I'll go with you."

"No, you won't!" replied Bolivar. "I'm going to make a call an' I don't need any help."

Bolivar was elated over his recovery of the watch and was eager to return it to Katie. After his parting shot at Skeets he broke into a dog-trot and covered the distance to Pickwick's store in a brief period. From the store to the Lake residence he walked slowly and in an unconcerned manner. He didn't want to appear eager to see Katie. He wanted it to be as though it were an everyday occurrence for him to recover a watch from the Missouri River.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

Reaching the Lake property, he climbed the fence (no country-town boy uses a gate when he can climb a fence) and went to the side door of the house. His knock brought Mrs. Lake. Bolivar had his hat in his hand.

"Here's the watch," he said, offering the timepiece to the widow. "It's purty well water-soaked."

Mrs. Lake was surprised and delighted. "Why, Bolivar," she said, "I had no idea you could recover that watch! How did you do it?"

"I dove fer it."

"I knew Bolivar would find it," said Katie, coming up from behind. "Mamma, Bolivar can do almost anything."

Bolivar felt like a king. Katie was praising him; he could ask for nothing sweeter in the whole world. Yet he kept himself in good control. All he did to indicate that he was pleased was to rip a piece of the band from his hat and kick a bug off the porch.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"We are very thankful to you, Bolivar," said Mrs. Lake.

"Well," he said, hesitatingly, "I'm glad yer glad." Then he turned to go.

"Wait a minute," said the widow. "Katie must give you some of the candy she's been making."

"Yes," said Katie. "I'll bring some out on a plate and we'll eat it together." Bolivar grinned in pure delight. Katie soon came out with the plate of candy.

"Let's go down in the grape arbor," she suggested. "It's cool down there."

Bolivar walked with her to the arbor, occasionally trying to step on an ant or a bug. She took a seat on a bench and asked him to sit beside her. He accepted the invitation, but took care that he was within reach of some soft earth in which to dig with his big toe. Katie offered him some candy and he chose a big piece.

"It ain't very good," she said, apologetically. "I can make better."

"It tastes good to me," he replied.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"What kind of candy do you like best?"

"I like the kind I happen to have."

Then both laughed.

Katie and Bolivar sat in the arbor half an hour, eating and talking.

"Speakin' of candy," said Bolivar, "'minds me of Skeets onct. His mother give him a stick of striped candy fer takin' a bath an' he brung it down to the swimmin' hole. First thing he knowed he dropped it in the river. I got it an' et half of it. I give him the rest an' he was eatin' it when a fly got on it an' stuck there. Skeets was tryin' to get the candy et up 'fore the other fellers asked him fer it an' he et the fly."

"He did?" came from the horrified Katie.

"Yep. I says, 'Look out, Skeets—you et a fly.' He got mad. He said I oughta said, 'Look out' 'fore he et the fly."

"Poor boy! That's too bad!"

Bolivar did not relish the idea of Katie's sympathizing with Skeets, even though he



## BOLIVAR BROWN

wasn't present. He dug his toe into the earth.

"Yes," he said, "but just think of the poor fly!"

Bolivar's story about the fly did not affect the appetite of either of the children. By this time the candy was almost gone and the boy arose to go.

"Guess I'd better be gettin' home," he said.

"What's your hurry?" asked Katie.

"Gotta get home fer dinner. I'm hungry." He meant it, too.

"Will you come an' see me again?" asked Katie.

"You want me to?"

"Of course I do. I think you're nice." And Katie busied herself trying to pull the last piece of candy from the plate.

"Honest I do," she added, without looking up.

Bolivar was standing now. His big toe was digging vigorously.

"Then I guess I'll tell you somethin'," he said.





HE SUMMONED ALL HIS COURAGE. "I'M STUCK ON YOU," HE SAID







## BOLIVAR BROWN

"What is it?"

He summoned all his courage. "I'm stuck on you," he said.

Having delivered himself of this important message, Bolivar turned and started away at a fast walk. Katie called to him to stop.

"Come back a minute," she said. He did, but could not look her in the face.

"What you want?" he asked.

"I'm stuck on you, too."

"Honest?"

"Honest."

Bolivar turned and ran. Through the yard he fairly flew and over the fence he went. He did not slacken his pace until he had reached his home.

"Gee!" he muttered. "Her stuck on me! By golly! I'm a-goin' to keep my face clean from now on."



## XVI

AT the supper table Friday evening Mrs. Brown asked Bolivar if he'd like to attend a church entertainment at the Methodist parsonage.

"They'll play games and have ice cream and cake," she said. "If you want to go I'll give you two tickets your father bought."

Bolivar decided to go. At his mother's suggestion he went upstairs and put on his best clothes; also his shoes and stockings. When he returned she gave him the two tickets.

"Take Skeets with you," she suggested. "The party begins at eight o'clock."

Bolivar thanked his mother and found Skeets. Of course Skeets wanted to go and he was soon arrayed in his Sunday clothes.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"We're goin' to have ice cream," said Bolivar as Skeets tied his shoe strings.

"We'll have it if Scrawney, Bill, an' them kids don't swipe it," replied Skeets. "Bol, mebbe to be sure of gettin' some, me an' you better stay away an' head a swipin' gang. They 'll leave the ice cream on the back porch till eatin' time comes."

"Naw!" replied Bolivar. "Le's go inside an' see what's goin' on."

At eight o'clock the two boys appeared at the parsonage and gave their tickets to Mary Beggs, the preacher's daughter, who ushered them to seats at one side of the parlor. They were the youngest of all present.

For a while time dragged, but when the games were introduced Bolivar and Skeets participated and enjoyed them. After spin-the-plate and other such games had been played, Miss Beggs distributed paper and pencils and said an essay-writing contest would be held.

"We'll take 'The Parrot' as our subject,"



## BOLIVAR BROWN

she said, "and the writer of the best essay will be given an extra dish of ice cream."

Everybody wrote for five minutes, Bolivar and Skeets included. The essays were then collected and turned over to Uncle Ezra Fox to read. When he came to Bolivar's a smile spread over his face as he read it aloud as follows:

"The parrit are a fethered bird what sets in a cage an' butts into yer business with cuss wirds an' advice. He are genrully green an' will peck yer finger. We have got a parrit what yells, 'Who the devil are you?' at people when he shouldn't be askin' such questions. The preacher don't like our parrit, for one day when he come to dinner Polly began to holler, 'Bald Head' at him. Next he sings out, 'Here, Bald Head; Here, Bald Head!' like as if the preacher were a dog. When my mother put the parrit out it yelled, 'Yer a fine wife, ain't you?' an' made my father mad. My father says parrits an' wimmen certainly talks too much.—BOL BROWN."

For a full minute after the final word had been read there was dead silence. Then Uncle Ezra began to laugh and the merri-ment became contagious. The preacher



## BOLIVAR BROWN

and Ann Eliza Chase did not laugh. Doctor Beggs left the room, but Miss Chase lit into Bolivar.

"Bolivar Brown," she said, "you ought to be ashamed for writing such an essay. If you was my boy I'd beat you black and blue."

"That essay just told what really happened," said Bolivar, doggedly.

"Makes no difference! You had no business writin' such a thing to humble Doctor Beggs. I'll see that your father hears of it."

"I reckon he'll hear about it soon enough," said Uncle Ezra, still smiling. "It'll be all over town 'fore long. Bolivar's essay was right pointed, but it was all in fun. The preacher ought to take it that away an' I reckon he will. Anyway, Bolivar never read it. I did that."

Miss Beggs came over and patted Bolivar on the head.

"He didn't mean to do anything wrong," she said. "Papa won't care. I know it happened just as he said it did."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"How did you know?" asked Uncle Ezra.

"Oh, somebody told me." And the girl smiled at Ann Eliza Chase insinuatingly.

At this point Doctor Beggs re-entered the room. "I think," he said, fully composed, "that Bolivar Brown wins the extra dish of ice cream. Doesn't he, Uncle Ezra?"

"I think so," replied Uncle Ezra.

Miss Beggs went to the kitchen to get the ice cream, but returned empty handed and excited.

"It's gone," she exclaimed. "I went out on the porch to get it, but it isn't there. Somebody has taken it."

"Boys!" snapped Miss Chase. "I'll bet it was Bolivar—" She caught herself just in time.

"No, not Bolivar!" said Uncle Ezra. "Here sits Bolivar right before our eyes."

"Well, I'll bet if he'd 'a' been outside he'd 'a' got it."

Uncle Ezra, smiling, was about to reply when Bolivar jumped out of his chair.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Me an' Skeets has got to go," he said. And the two boys grabbed their hats and rushed out.

"Which way do you s'pose they went?" asked Bolivar, once they were out of the house.

"Mebbe to the old blacksmith shop," suggested Skeets.

They started on the run and reached the shop in two minutes. Skeets had guessed right. There they found Scrawney, Bill, Jimmy, and Inky. Bolivar and Skeets sat down and helped themselves.

"What made you fellers swipe it?" asked Bolivar between mouthfuls.

"We never had no tickets to get in," replied Scrawney.

"An'," chimed in Bill, "they left it right out on the porch in plain sight from the alley."

"They hadn't oughter left it out like that. I don't see how you fellers can be blamed fer takin' it," said Bolivar.

Scrawney and Inky volunteered to return



## BOLIVAR BROWN

the empty can to the porch of the parsonage. As Bolivar and Skeets left the shop the former said:

"Skeets, me an' you can't be blamed fer this swipin', can we?"

"No," replied Skeets. "Me an' you are innercent as babies this time."

The sun was high in the sky Saturday morning when Bolivar started down the street in search of adventure. Near the old blacksmith shop he found Inky, Skeets, Scrawney, Bill, and Jimmy sitting on the sidewalk. As Bolivar joined the gathering Doctor Beggs happened along and stopped.

"Bolivar," he said, "I'm sorry you didn't get your ice cream last night. Here, take this dime and buy something to make up for the loss of the ice cream."

He held out a ten-cent piece, but Bolivar made no move to accept it.

"No thanks!" he said. "I can't take it. You didn't swipe the ice cream."

"Take it, Bolivar! Please do!"

"No, thanks!"



## BOLIVAR BROWN

Doctor Beggs was determined to carry his point. He dropped the coin in the grass and walked away. Before he had gone ten yards there was a rough-and-tumble scramble for the dime. All the boys were in it but Bolivar. Scrawney came out the victor.

"I got it," he yelled, joyfully. "I'm goin' to buy a ball with it."

"Gimme that dime!" demanded Bolivar. "It's mine. I worked that money out of Doctor Beggs."

"All right," said Scrawney, realizing the justice of Bolivar's stand. And he handed it over.

"Now, all of you foller me," said Bolivar. "I'll take you to Pickwick's store an' buy some candy."

They moved away and Inky took a mouth organ from his pocket. Bolivar had an idea on seeing it.

"Inky, can you play 'Turkey in the Straw?'" he asked.

"Sho!"

"Well, I understand old man Pickwick



## BOLIVAR BROWN

used to fiddle for dances over north of here an' 'Turkey in the Straw' was his fav'rite tune. If you act right with that mouth organ we'll get twice as much candy as we will if you don't."

"Jes' tell me what ter do."

"When we go in the store I'll talk to Mr. Pickwick an' you start up that tune."

"What's the idee, Bol?" asked Scrawney.

"Why, he'll be so tickled to hear his fav'rite tune that he'll give us more candy."

Scrawney scoffed at the idea, but Bolivar was determined to try it. In the store they found Mr. Pickwick and Peleg Lee.

"Howdy, Bolivar!" said the storekeeper.

"What 'll you have to-day—half a bushel of tea?" And Hezekiah smiled at Peleg.

"No," replied the boy, "but how's yer cat, Mr. Pickwick?"

Hezekiah saw the point and laughed. He was good humored this morning.

"Bested me, hod dog it!" he chuckled.

"Peleg, blamed if this boy 'ain't got me ragged."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Reckon you better leave him be?" came from Peleg.

"Reckon so. Well, Bol, what do you want?"

"Candy! Want a big dime's worth."

"Le's see yer dime."

Bolivar handed it over. "That ain't no big dime," said Hezekiah, with another laugh.

"Looks mighty big to me," replied Bolivar. "I 'ain't seen one fer so long, you know."

"Raggin' you ag'in, ain't he?" came from Peleg.

"Looks like it." Then to Bolivar: "What kind you want—mixed er gumdraps?"

"Mixed!"

It was at this point that Inky began "Turkey in the Straw." He played it furiously. Hezekiah set the candy jar down and addressed Peleg. "That's the best old tune ever wrote," he said. "It beats all this here high-toned music seven hundred miles from Sunday. Hod dog it!"



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"It certainly is foot ticklin'," said Peleg.

"Foot ticklin'? Well, I should say so. Why, when I sawed the fiddle people used to threaten to mob me if I didn't play that tune. Honest, Peleg, they ain't nothin' as good as it in any of the best music books."

Inky was playing harder than ever. Hezekiah came around the end of the counter and began to pat his hands and stamp one foot on the floor.

"It's great!" he yelled. Then, just boiling over with enthusiasm, he began to execute a reel step. The boys moved back to give him room and the storekeeper injected more energy into his dancing. Just as he was becoming red in the face the doorway was darkened and in came Ann Eliza Chase.

The arrival of the old maid put an end to Hezekiah's dancing. Sheepishly he hastened behind the counter and filled the candy sack to the top. Then he ventured to look at Miss Chase. Peleg had his hand over his mouth.

"Yer a fine church member, ain't you,



## BOLIVAR BROWN

Hezekiah Pickwick?" said the old maid, scornfully.

It confused Hezekiah. He recovered quickly, however, and replied: "Well, I reckon I pay my 'sessments prompt as any of 'em."

The boys were edging out of the store. As he reached the door Bolivar said:

"Miss Chase, Mr. Pickwick couldn't help it. He ain't to blame. We knowed he couldn't stand it to keep still while that tune was bein' played, so we had Inky play it. We knowed if we got him feelin' happy he'd give us more candy. Fergive him!"

"What? How's that?" yelled the store-keeper. "You boys played a trick on me? Get out o' here!"

Hezekiah started for the door, but the boys had gone. Ann Eliza Chase went on her way hardly knowing whether to smile or frown.



## XVII

PROMPTLY at ten o'clock on Tuesday morning Bolivar, Inky, Skeets, Scrawney, Jimmy, and Bill filed into the office of Uncle Ezra Fox and found him waiting for them. He greeted them with a "Howdy, boys!" and asked them to be seated until he finished a letter he was writing. After a brief wait James Lake came in. Uncle Ezra then stopped writing and closed the door.

"Boys," the old man began, when all had drawn their chairs closer to his desk, "I reckon yer surprised at bein' invited to come here so mysterious, ain't you?"

"A little bit," Bolivar acknowledged.

"I thought so. Well, me an' Mr. Lake here have got a scheme to make you all some money."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"What you want to make us money for, Uncle Ezra?" asked Bolivar. "You don't owe us nothin'."

"Hush up, Bol!" said the old man, with a smile. "'Ain't we got the right to make you money if we want to? This here is a free country. Now, me an' Mr. Lake has got this chance to do you kids some good an' we're a-goin' to do it whether you want us to er not."

Here Uncle Ezra stopped to wipe the perspiration from his face. This feat accomplished, he said to Lake, "Shall I go ahead er do you want to tell 'em?"

"You explain it."

"Well, boys," continued Uncle Ezra, "yer all members of the Paw Paw Minin' Company."

The youngsters looked from one man's face to that of the other in wonder. Just what the announcement meant was not clear to them. They knew of no mines in the vicinity of Paw Paw Corner.

"This here concerns all the cave boys,"



## BOLIVAR BROWN

the old man went on. "They's coal in that cave. Coal, you understand?"

The boys did understand, but not very well. In those days little coal was burned in Missouri outside the cities and on the steam engines and steamboats. Nobody in Paw Paw Corner burned coal. Wood was too plentiful.

"You say they's coal in the cave?" asked Bolivar.

"That's what! Good coal, too."

"Well, it ain't none of it ours. It's your'n," came from Skeets.

"Wrong!" said Uncle Ezra. "It was mine, but now it belongs to the Paw Paw Minin' Company, the company that yer all interested in."

"An we're goin' to get money out of it?" asked Skeets.

"You bet you are!"

"We had a dime the other day," Scrawney put in. "We bought candy with it."

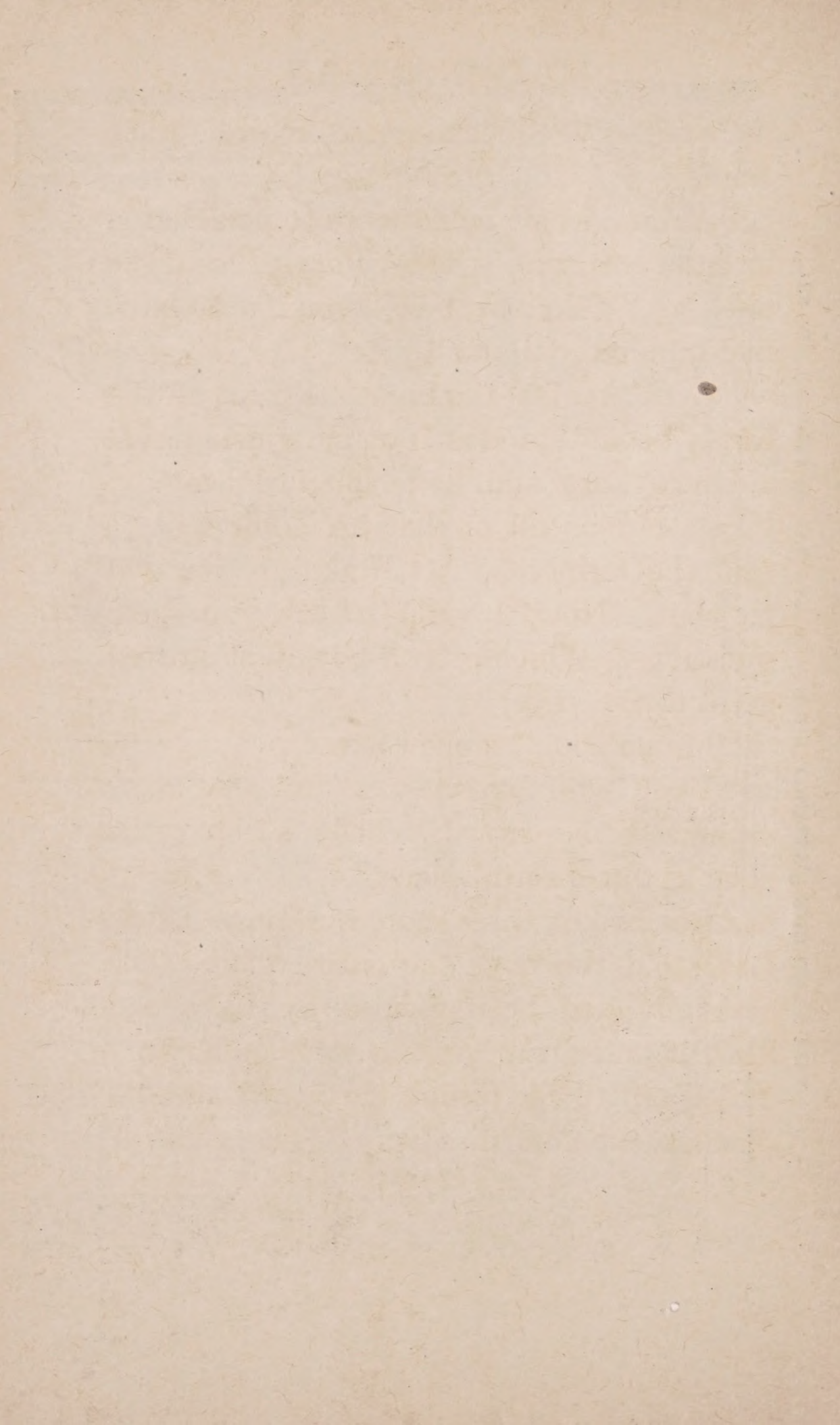
Lake smiled. "I've seen the time when a dime counted for just as much to me,"





"YER ALL MEMBERS OF THE PAW PAW MININ' COMPANY," SAID UNCLE EZRA







## BOLIVAR BROWN

he said. "Tell 'em some more, Uncle Ezra."

"A dime won't be no more to you than a grain of corn is to a hungry horse," said the old man. "Bolivar, how'd you like to have five hundred dollars?"

"Gee!" replied the boy. "I'd eat all the candy I could stand an' buy me a jackknife."

Uncle Ezra and Lake laughed heartily. "You can do all o' that an' some more," said the former. "Mr. Lake an' me will fix that. Now, I want to ask you some questions. Which of you boys first started goin' to the cave?"

"Me an' Bol," replied Skeets.

"Yep!" said Scrawney. "Bol an' Skeets organized the crowd. They s'lected the cave as our meetin' place."

After two or three more questions, Uncle Ezra told the boys the entire plan. The company had been formed by Lake and himself and arrangements were under way to sell out to St. Joseph parties who would develop the coal discovery. The vein, he



## BOLIVAR BROWN

said, was three feet thick and was less than one hundred feet below the surface. All that was necessary for the boys to do was to sign their names to the organization's papers. He was to act as president, and Lake as secretary and treasurer, until the property was disposed of.

"You boys unearthed that vein when you blasted," said Uncle Ezra. "Mr. Lake's brother had a suspicion they was coal there and it was his idea to see what the blast would uncover."

Bolivar and Inky glanced at each other. In the mind of each was the picture of the banker strolling around near the Anderson home.

"Now," said Uncle Ezra, "sign up!"

He took some papers from his drawer and one by one the boys scrawled their names on the lines pointed out by the old man. The names came in the following order:

Bolivar Brown,	Eli Anderson,
Charles Wilson,	William Hurst,
Frank Hicks,	James Biggar.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

The signing done, Uncle Ezra and Lake affixed their signatures at the bottom of the page.

"Now," said Lake, "the company is formed. We're all equal owners in the proposition."

"I've got an appointment to meet one of the St. Joe men who want to buy us out," said Uncle Ezra. "I'm goin' to St. Joe to see him to-morrer. When I come back I'll call another meetin.' Have I got yer full permission to act in the matter?"

Bolivar understood and replied in the affirmative for all the boys. The meeting was then declared adjourned, and everybody left the room but Uncle Ezra and Bolivar. The old man said he wanted a few words with the lad. Fifteen minutes after the meeting had been adjourned the whole town was talking about the Paw Paw Mining Company. The fact that coal had been discovered threatened to give the town a boom.

"Say, Bolivar," said Uncle Ezra, when



## BOLIVAR BROWN

Lake and the other boys had gone, "I thought mebbe you'd like to run up to St. Joe with me to-morrer. Would you?"

The boy was delighted. He never had been to St. Joseph. "You bet I would," he replied. "Do you really mean it?"

"O' course! Be at my house at seven-thirty sharp to-morrer mornin'. We'll take the eight-o'clock train. Tell yer folks you'll be home to-morrer night an' not to worry 'bout you."

Greatly pleased, Bolivar turned to go. Before he reached the door an idea stopped him. "Uncle Ezra," he said, turning back, "you have been mighty good to us boys."

"Be on hand to-morrer," said the old man.

"Oh, I'll be there, but I got somethin' I'd like to suggest."

"What is it?"

"You know Tim Walker, the little feller the kids call Humpy. Him that's got the spine disease an' can't get out of the house much?"



## BOLIVAR BROWN

“Course!”

Bolivar twirled his hat on one finger and gazed at the floor. “Uncle Ezra,” he said, “le’s put his name down, too. I’m sure he’d ‘a’ b’en a member of the cave gang if he was well.”

Uncle Ezra drew out the organization’s papers again. “Sign it there,” he said, indicating a line.

Bolivar wrote “Tim Walker” as instructed to.

“Thanks!” he said. Then he fled from the room, slamming the door behind him.

Uncle Ezra developed a suspicious moisture in his eyes. Dropping back in his chair, he murmured:

“Bol Brown, yer a fine boy. You got a heart in you—a square heart. I’m fer you. I—I wisht you wus mine.”

The old man’s arms went down on his desk. His head dropped on them and for fifteen minutes he dreamed of boys and a boy he had known in the far-away past.



## XVIII

THE ride to St. Joseph the next day was brimming over with interest for Bolivar. Uncle Ezra spent much of the time in the smoking car and Bolivar was left alone to marvel at what he saw through the car window. It was during the time that the old man was in the other car that a young woman sat down beside the boy.

"Good morning, Bolivar!" she said.

"Why, howdy, Miss Brewster!" he replied. "Are you goin' to St. Joe, too?"

"Yes. But next week I'm going much farther. I'm going clear to Georgia to visit my aunt for a year."

Bolivar had no idea how far Georgia was. "Huh!" he said. "Guess you'll have to travel three or four hours, won't you?"

She smiled faintly. "Much more than that," she said.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Mr. Jim Lake told me he travelled all night on a train one time," said the boy. "That must 'a' be'n fun."

The mention of Lake's name drove the faint smile from Millie Brewster's face. She did not reply for a moment. Finally, however, she asked: "You know Mr. Lake, then?"

"Sure! An' he's a fine feller. Him an' Uncle Ezra are goin' to make us kids rich out of the coal mine. Do you know him?"

"Why, I—I used to," stammered the young woman. "That is, I knew him before—" She could go no further. Her throat clogged with emotion and, placing her handkerchief to her eyes, she wept just a little. Bolivar looked at her, amazed. Though just a boy, he realized that there had been something between Miss Brewster and James Lake. For the moment the scenery was forgotten while he turned over in his mind everything Lake had ever said to him. He went back to the night he delivered the note to Miss Brewster and the



## BOLIVAR BROWN

incident was now full of significance. Then he remembered the fight in the barn and realized who the "Millie" mentioned by John Lake was. He wondered why he hadn't realized it at the time.

The young woman dried her eyes and attempted to laugh off her show of emotion.

"I—I have a cold, I guess," she said.

Bolivar was thinking of her interrupted sentence of a few moments before. Now he knew the girl was aware of the fact that Lake had been in the penitentiary; he was certain, also, that she was in love with the man. It looked to him as though the time was ripe to do his friend and benefactor a service.

"Miss Millie," he said, "you recollect the night I delivered you a note from Mr. Lake?"

"Yes," she said, softly.

"That was the night he arrived in town. I got a hunch you know where he had come from. Am I right?"

"Yes, Bolivar!"



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Well, I know all about that, but it's been a little secret with me an' Skeets an' Inky. We wasn't never goin' to tell it, but now that it's a secret with you, too, I'm goin' to tell you some more an' set Mr. Lake right."

The girl, again on the verge of tears, pulled herself together.

"What can you tell me?" she asked, eagerly.

Bolivar then related to her the adventure he and his two companions had had on the night of the fight in the barn. He told her all he had heard and wound the story up with an assertion that he would bet his life James Lake never committed a crime.

"He's one of the finest, squarest men I ever met," said Bolivar. "He did it for his brother. I heard his brother admit it."

Millie Brewster sat as one turned to stone for a moment. Then she gave way to emotion again and, grasping Bolivar in her arms, kissed him squarely on his lips. The next instant she was gone—to the ladies'



## BOLIVAR BROWN

room, and Uncle Ezra returned from the smoker.

The train reached St. Joseph shortly after nine o'clock. Uncle Ezra and Bolivar left it at the Francis Street station and walked uptown. They took a stroll through the business district and at ten o'clock went to the office of the capitalist who was interested in the coal proposition. He had arranged to meet the old man at noon, but was disengaged at this time, so they got down to business immediately.

It required but a short time for them to come to an understanding. It was arranged that the capitalist, Mr. Barnes, should send a man to Paw Paw Corner as soon as possible to examine the coal land and report to him.

"I think, Mr. Fox," said Mr. Barnes, "you have a piece of property we want. I don't mind telling you I am after it for the railroad people. We have needed coal land up that way for a long time. I can see quite a little sum there for you if the report



## BOLIVAR BROWN

is favorable—possibly ten thousand dollars.”

After the conference Uncle Ezra told Bolivar he wanted to visit a cousin who lived in St. Joseph. Together the old man and the boy went to the home of the former's relative, a woman named Taylor. Mrs. Taylor met them at the door.

The Taylors were well-to-do. They lived in a big house on North Sixth Street. There was a young woman in the family and she took on herself the entertainment of Bolivar, while Uncle Ezra and her mother discussed relations in the sitting room. Miss Taylor escorted Bolivar to the parlor.

“So this is little Mr. Brown I've heard Uncle Ezra speak of?” she asked, with a smile.

Bolivar admitted it was.

“Uncle Ezra—we all call him that—says you're about the smartest boy in Paw Paw Corner.”

“He's just stuffin' you,” replied the boy as he twirled his hat.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Oh, I guess not. Uncle Ezra never tries to fool me. I must say I am delighted to meet you. Uncle Ezra often tells us of the funny pranks you and your boy friends play."

The line of conversation was embarrassing to Bolivar. He looked about the room for an excuse to switch it and his eye lit on a picture over the piano.

"Nice picture," he said.

"Yes," replied Miss Taylor. "It's Uncle Ezra's mother. You Paw Paw boys must be very cute."

"The people of the town don't think us kids are very funny," he said. At this point he saw another picture. "What's that man doin' in that paintin'?" he asked.

"He is delivering a sermon—the Sermon on the Mount. You know all about that, I presume."

Bolivar was stuck, but he couldn't admit it. "I think I read about it in Sunday school," he said.

"Isn't that fine!" came from the girl.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Now, can you tell me what the sermon was about?"

Bolivar realized he had put his foot in it. He was wondering how to get out of it when, on glancing through the window, he saw two dogs threatening each other with violence.

"Golly!" he said, stepping to the window. "There's two dogs about to scrap."

The young woman came to the window. "Oh, I hope they don't," she said.

Just then the fight began and Bolivar hurried outdoors. The fight did not last long, but it was long enough to make Miss Taylor forget all about the sermon. When they returned to the house Uncle Ezra was in the parlor. Bolivar and he remained at the Taylor home for dinner and left at two o'clock.

The old man and the boy spent the afternoon at a two-ring circus near the edge of the town. At the conclusion of the performance Uncle Ezra sought the manager and asked if he intended to show at Paw



## BOLIVAR BROWN

Paw Corner. The manager said the show would be there in two weeks.

"You've got a good performance," said Uncle Ezra. "Gimme ten tickets good for Paw Paw."

The tickets were handed over and paid for. Uncle Ezra gave them to Bolivar.

"There you are, Bol," he said. "Pass 'em 'round among yer friends, givin' Tim Walker one. Somebody'll help him get there."

Bolivar thanked Uncle Ezra. The old man and the boy then went to the station and boarded a train for home.



## XIX

THE following Monday a St. Joseph man came to Paw Paw Corner and called on Uncle Ezra. He was the expert representing Mr. Barnes. He was favorably impressed with the coal land and took some samples of the product to St. Joseph with him that evening. Before leaving he told Uncle Ezra two weeks must pass before a final decision on the purchase of the ground could be made. The next morning Uncle Ezra had all the boys in his office again to tell them about the expert's report. Again he asked Bolivar to remain after the others had gone.

"Say, Bol," said the old man, "I think I once told you I had a son, didn't I?"

Bolivar nodded. "What ever become of him?" he asked.

"My boy," the old man continued in a



## BOLIVAR BROWN

low tone, "I never knowed. When he was about four he was stole from me. Just who stole him I couldn't never find out. I always thought it was some show people who had a little circus at our town, but I couldn't find the boy, although I follered that show fer days. The little feller was the pride of my heart an' his mother jest worshiped him. She died six months after he was stole. The kidnappin' helped hurry her off."

"What wus his name?" asked Bolivar.

"His full name was William Henry Fox. I know if he'd been left to me he'd 'a' be'n jest sech a boy as you are. Want to see his picture?"

Uncle Ezra drew from his coat pocket a little, old, worn photograph. It was dim, yet the face of a golden-haired boy could be seen in it.

"That's Billy," he said, softly. "That's my little boy. God only knows where he is now. If I knowed I'd spend every last cent I got to try an' get him back.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Somehow er ruther I b'lieve he's alive an' I have a feelin' that some day he'll come back an' see me 'fore I go. He'd be a man now. O' course, he wus too young to 'member much. I'm certain he'd know his name, though, fer I taught him to say 'Billy Fox' every time he wus asked what it wus. I wus pretty nigh crazy, Bol, when they stole my little boy away from me."

Bolivar looked at the picture and handed it back to the old man.

"He certainly was a nice-lookin' little feller," he said. "I bet you'd be mighty glad to get him back, even though he was a man. But, Uncle Ezra, you wouldn't be no gladder, I bet, than he would be to get you back."

"I don't know nothin' 'bout how glad he'd be to see me," said the old man. "I only know I'd fearful well like to see him. Maybe he's got a little feller now 'bout the age he was when he wus stole. Bolivar, old Uncle Ezra is lonesome."

"Well, Uncle Ezra," said the boy, "if I



## BOLIVAR BROWN

ever get a chance to find out anything 'bout yer son, you bet I'll do it."

"I know you will, Bol," the old man replied, with a sad smile. Bolivar left the office.

A week went by and nothing of great importance transpired in the lives of the cave boys. One day, however, half a dozen men came to town and pasted show bills on fences, barns, and other buildings. The bills announced the coming of the tent show Bolivar and Uncle Ezra had seen in St. Joseph. When Bolivar saw the bills going up he found the boys and distributed the tickets. Nine he gave away, one going to Tim Walker, whom Skeets and Scrawney agreed to push to the scene in a wheeled chair. All the recipients of tickets were told to thank Uncle Ezra and they did.

The day before the circus was due to arrive Bolivar told his pals he would not be able to attend the show with them.

"Why not?" demanded Skeets.

"Never mind! I'll be there, but I can't



## BOLIVAR BROWN

go with you fellers. If you see me there don't you dare to guy me."

"He's probably goin' to take his mother," said Scrawney.

That evening Bolivar went home through the street on which was the Lake residence. Mrs. Lake and Katie were seated on the front porch.

"Hello, Bolivar!" called Katie.

"Won't you come in?" asked the widow. The boy accepted and approached the porch, hat in hand.

"Say, Katie," he began, "s'posin'!"

"S'posin' what?"

"S'posin I wus dressed up in my Sunday clothes an' I had two tickets to the circus. Would you go with me?"

Katie was delighted. "Oh, mamma," she said, "won't you let me go to the circus with Bolivar? He'll take care of me."

The widow smiled. Though John Lake had been dead but a few weeks, she saw no reason why the little girl should miss the circus.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Yes, Katie," she replied. "If Bolivar will take good care of you, it will be all right."

"Oh, I'll take care of her fine," replied the boy, highly delighted.

"It's nice of you to ask her," the widow continued. "Katie has you alone to thank for the pleasure in store for her. No one here could have taken her."

Bolivar cast a smile at Katie and she smiled at him. The boy started away.

"I'll come at one o'clock," he said.

With that he started for home on the run, vaulting the fence with the grace of a deer.

Bolivar had been saving his money since his trip to St. Joseph to have enough to take Katie to the circus. His father had given him a quarter and he had earned another by cutting the grass in the front yard of his home. Of the fifty cents, he expected to spend half for Katie's ticket and the rest for peanuts and lemonade. He would go in on the ticket he had withheld from the ten Uncle Ezra bought.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

After he had seen the circus wagons unloaded and had viewed the parade Bolivar went home and donned his Sunday clothes. Eating almost no dinner at all, he hurried to the Lake residence. In his pocket jingled his two quarters.

Katie met him at the door, dressed in a fresh white starched gown. In her hair was a red ribbon. Bolivar never had seen her looking so sweet. They reached the tent at one-thirty, running the gantlet of the gazes of the other boys, including Tim Walker, whom Skeets and Scrawney had in their charge. Approaching the ticket wagon, Bolivar made a painful discovery. He had lost one quarter.

The boy was greatly disturbed. Of course, he could buy Katie's ticket; he'd have nothing to spend. He didn't like to ask the other boys for a loan, as he knew they needed what little money they had. His position was indeed embarrassing.

However, Bolivar was a youth of action and he did not hesitate long.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Katie," he said, "will you 'xcuse me a minute? I gotta go 'round behind the tent an' see 'bout somethin'. Skeets will stay with you while I'm gone. Won't you, Skeets?"

Skeets announced he would be glad to remain with Katie. He realized something was worrying Bolivar, but he did not inquire about it at that time. Katie asked no questions. Her faith in Bolivar was admirable. The little girl took her stand by Skeets and Bolivar disappeared. He was going to take a big chance.

On the other side of the tent Bolivar found a man with a club watching to keep boys from slipping under the canvas. The youngster had his scheme all hatched and he went straight to the watchman.

"Is this John?" he asked.

"John? No!" replied the man, gruffly. "What do you want, kid? My name's Tom."

Bolivar moved as though to leave. "I guess yer not the man," he said. "I



## BOLIVAR BROWN

thought he said, 'John, the man behind the tent.'"

"Did you just come from the main entrance?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Well, why don't you keep your ears open? The boss wants me, I reckon. He said 'Tom,' didn't he?"

"Mebbe, but I didn't hear him say 'Tom.'"

The man grunted something about "careless kids" and started for the front of the tent. The minute he was out of sight Bolivar ducked under the canvas.

"I never told him a lie," he said to himself. "That is, I never 'xactly told him one."

Straight to the entrance Bolivar went. He procured a pass-out ticket and found Katie just where he had left her. He had been gone but two minutes.

"Come on, Katie," he said. The two went in, using the pass-out check and the ticket Uncle Ezra had given Bolivar. In-



## BOLIVAR BROWN

side the tent the boy came face to face with the watchman. Bolivar held his breath. He expected trouble.

"Hey, Kid!" said the man. "You was right. The boss didn't want me."

"I never thought he did," replied Bolivar, as he and Katie hurried on.

The boy and girl found seats where they could watch everything that transpired in the two rings. It was a rare treat for them. The trapeze performers, the tumblers, the riders, and all pleased them greatly. Bolivar explained the sights to Katie and bought peanuts and lemonade for her. He was having the best time of his life. Katie was all smiles and excitement.



## XX

JUST before the closing act the circus band stopped playing and a ringmaster led a bay pony into view. Climbing on to a table, the man said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, you see before you Jack, the champion bucking pony of the Middle West. He makes it a business not to permit people to remain on his back. To any boy who will stay on him three minutes the management will give a five-dollar bill. Come on, boys!"

For a moment nobody stirred. Then a boy stepped forward. It was Scrawney. Bolivar and Katie recognized him at once.

"So you wish to try to ride Jack?" asked the ringmaster.

Scrawney admitted he had the desire. He was assisted to the back of the pony,



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and soon the little animal was bucking wildly. Scrawney held on gamely for half a dozen bucks and then went off, over Jack's head, landing unhurt in the sawdust. The spectators laughed and the ringmaster called for another volunteer. He soon appeared in the person of Skeets. Bolivar had hoped Scrawney would win the money. Now he transferred the hope to Skeets.

"Stick to him, Skeets!" he yelled.

Skeets heard him and grinned, but after half a minute of energetic work Jack dislodged the boy. The audience roared, but Skeets didn't care. Again the man called for a rider.

"Where is that boy who yelled for this last one to stick on?" he asked.

"He means you, Bolivar?" said Katie. Bolivar's face grew red.

"Well," he said, "I can ride that pony."

"Go try it," suggested the little girl. The boy hesitated no more. Katie had told him to go, and that was enough. He bounded out of his seat.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Here I am!" he yelled.

"Good!" replied the ringmaster. "Get on the pony's back."

Bolivar had noticed that the pony's front legs seldom left the ground when he bucked. He argued to himself that, if he sat squarely over Jack's shoulders, he would be better able to stick on. He was assisted to the little steed's back and the bucking began immediately.

Bolivar had worked out the winning method. He sat right over Jack's shoulders and dug his fingers into the pony's mane. Jack bucked furiously for half a minute and then began to tire. The audience went wild. Above the roar Bolivar could hear his pals urging him to win. At the expiration of a minute Jack's energy began to wane, and at the end of two minutes he was completely tired out. Bolivar remained on his back until the audience began to yell "three minutes," and then slipped to the ground.

"Do I win?" he asked.



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"You do," replied the ringmaster. "You're a gritty kid." The man mounted the table again.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "this young man has ridden Jack to a standstill. He has done something no other boy has been able to accomplish this season. He wins the five dollars."

The crowd cheered. The ringmaster drew from his pocket a notebook, from which he tore a sheet. On this he wrote something with a pencil.

"Give this paper to the show's manager in the ticket wagon," he said to Bolivar, as he handed him the slip of paper. "His name is Fox—William Fox. He'll pay you the five."

Bolivar was startled by the name. "Say," he asked, "do they call him Billy Fox?"

The ringmaster nodded. "Almost everybody does," he said.

Bolivar did not seek the manager of the show at once. He took Katie home first. She thanked him profusely for the after-



## BOLIVAR BROWN

noon's fun and invited him to come and see her soon. Bolivar said he would, and then they parted. For once the boy was eager to leave the little girl. He wanted to see Uncle Ezra Fox.

It was about five o'clock. Bolivar found Uncle Ezra in his office.

"Hello, Bol!" the old man said. "You ought to be at the circus, oughtn't you?"

"I been. I took Katie along."

"Gettin' to be quite a ladies' man, ain't you?"

Bolivar grinned. "I got somethin' else I want to talk to you 'bout," he said.

"Sit down. What is it?"

"Uncle Ezra," said Bolivar, taking a seat on the edge of a chair, "you recollect I said if ever I got a chance to help you find Billy Fox, I'd do it?"

The old man's face grew solemn. "I do, Bolivar, an' I know you meant it."

"Uncle Ezra, I ain't sure, but I got a hunch I've found Billy."

The old man's eyes grew big and he



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sprang from his chair. "What's that?" he almost shouted. "You think you've found Billy Fox? Aw, Bol, don't joke me on that subject. It's too near my old heart."

"I ain't jokin' you, Uncle Ezra. You said you thought Billy Fox was stole by circus people, didn't you?"

"Yes," replied the old man, eagerly.

"Well, they's a Billy Fox runnin' the show that's in town to-day. He's the feller that sold you the tickets in St. Joe. Mebbe he's yer Billy, Uncle Ezra."

The old man put his pipe on his desk and reached for his hat.

"Show him to me, Bolivar," he said. "Show me this Billy Fox again. If the Lord lets me find my boy He'll be mighty kind. Come on, quick, Bolivar. Show him to me."

They hurried to the circus grounds. On the way Bolivar told all about riding the pony and winning the five dollars. He showed Uncle Ezra the paper.

"We'll hunt up Fox an' cash the order



## BOLIVAR BROWN

first," said the old man. "That 'll give me a good look at him."

They found the manager in his little private tent. He asked them in.

"So you're the lad who rode the pony?" he said, pleasantly, to Bolivar, as he handed him a five-dollar bill. "You're a plucky boy. What will you do with this money—give it to your father?"

"I'll give it to him to keep fer me. If he needs it he can spend it."

"That's right, my boy! I like to see young fellows treat their fathers with consideration. I'd like to have a father to treat that way."

"'Ain't you got none?" asked Uncle Ezra, gazing straight into the manager's eyes.

"Not as I know of. I've been in this business ever since I can remember. Seems to me the canvasmen used to tell me I never had a father. I believe my parents were trapeze people and that both were killed in falls."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

Uncle Ezra, trembling with eagerness, arose from the box on which he had been sitting and stepped nearer the manager.

"Yer name is Fox," he said. "You've been called Billy Fox ever since you can remember, 'ain't you?"

"Yes."

"Lemme see yer right forearm!"

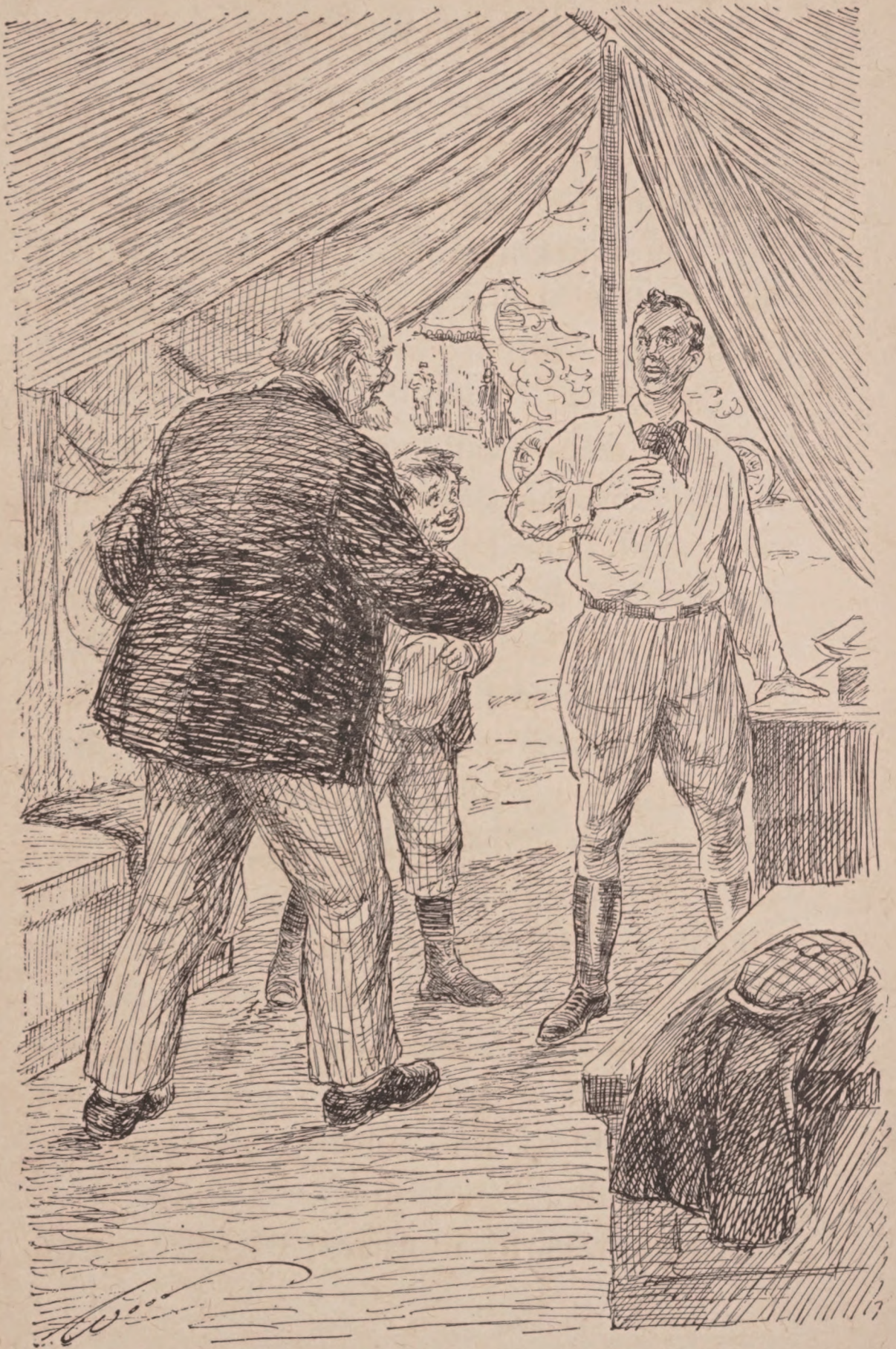
The manager was puzzled. Then it dawned on him that the old man was trying to identify him. He unbuttoned his cuff and turned back his sleeve. There on his arm was a small scar. Uncle Ezra grasped the manager's hand.

"Billy Fox," he said, softly. "Billy Fox, don't you recollect how I poked you in that arm with the pitchfork when I wus beddin' the horse? Billy, don't you recollect mother? Mamalie you used to call her, Billy!"

The old man sank on to the box and covered his face with his hands. The manager was speechless, but only for a moment.

"Mamalie?" he said. "I do! I do! Mamalie was my mother. I had forgotten,





"LEMME SEE YER RIGHT FOREARM!"







## BOLIVAR BROWN

but—" Here he recovered himself. "But who are you?"

"Uncle Ezry Fox, yer daddy!" came from the old man. "Your daddy, the one you 'ain't seen fer thirty years or more. The daddy the circus people stole you from. Oh, if Mamalie could only be here!"

Again the old man covered his face with his hands, and this time he wept softly. The manager sat down beside him. His strong right arm went around Uncle Ezra's shoulders.

"Daddy," he said. "It seems strange to call anybody that. But, daddy, I know you're mine and I'm yours."

At hearing himself called daddy Uncle Ezra's arm stole about the younger man's back and he patted him on the shoulder.

"Mamalie's gone, Billy," he said. "Mamalie called for you when she wus goin', though. She never fergot you fer one second. 'If you ever find Billy Fox,' she says, 'tell him Mamalie wanted to see her little boy. Say she asked God every night to



## BOLIVAR BROWN

care for him. 'Tell him Mamalie will always watch over him from above.'"

Tears were in the eyes of both men. Bolivar slipped out of the tent unnoticed and sat down on a wagon tongue thirty feet away, to wait for Uncle Ezra. A few minutes later the flap of the tent was thrown aside and Billy Fox appeared.

"Come in, my boy!" he called. "We want to see you."

Bolivar re-entered the tent. "Bol," said Uncle Ezra, "I want you to meet my son, Billy Fox. The good Lord an' Bolivar Brown have steered us together." With that the old man turned to the manager.

"Billy," he said, "this is one of the finest, smartest boys in the world. Bolivar Brown's his name. He's my friend an' I want you two to be friends."

Bolivar and the showman shook hands. "Now," said Uncle Ezra, "I want you two to come to my house for supper. Billy, I'll show you yer old baby clothes."

Bolivar declined. "I better leave you



## BOLIVAR BROWN

two alone to-night," he said. "I'll come up some other time, Uncle Ezra. 'Sides, I got a little work to do at home, bringin' in kindlin' wood an' the like."

"All right!" said the happy old man. "Come 'round to the office to-morrer mornin'. I want to see you. Good-by fer to-night!"

"Good-by!"

"Hold on," said Billy Fox, taking a ticket from his pocket and writing on it. "Take this along an' use it to-night."

Bolivar looked at the ticket. On it was written:

Good for Bolivar Brown and five friends to any part  
of the show at any time.

BILLY FOX.



## XXI

IT wasn't long until everybody within a radius of twenty-five miles of the Square knew that Uncle Ezra had found his long-lost son. Uncle Ezra, himself, told it first, giving Bolivar credit for having brought them together. The St. Joseph papers printed accounts of the reunion and praised Bolivar without stint.

"I didn't do much," Bolivar explained to questioners. "I just heard the man's name was Billy Fox an' told Uncle Ezra. He did the rest."

Billy Fox sent his show on to the next stop without him. That night he and Uncle Ezra spent several hours talking of the long ago. Before they retired Uncle Ezra promised to spend the following week traveling with the circus in order to be near Billy. Billy promised that at the end of the sum-



## BOLIVAR BROWN

mer season he would return to Paw Paw Corner and spend a month with his father. He said he had a wife, but no children. His wife lived in a town in Illinois.

"Billy," said Uncle Ezra at the breakfast table next morning, "I'm goin' to have a little meetin' of boys in my office this mornin' an' I'd like to have you tend it. I want to show you some real youngsters."

Billy said he'd be present. After breakfast the two walked downtown and ran into Bolivar near Pickwick's store. Uncle Ezra asked him to have the boys at his office at ten o'clock.

"I got somethin' to tell you 'bout our mine proposition," said the old man. Bolivar promised the boys would be there, and started out to notify them. Uncle Ezra and Billy went into the store and spent half an hour talking with the old man's cronies. When they left Peleg Lee called Billy back.

"You stay outside a minute, Ezry," he said. "We want to talk to Billy."

Uncle Ezra complied with the request and Billy turned back into the store.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Go on, Peleg!" Tell Mr. Fox what you got to say," said Hezekiah.

"Naw! You tell him!"

"Well, Mr. Fox," Hezekiah began, "we're all agreed to what I'm 'bout to say. We're all mighty glad Uncle Ezry has found his son, but we're hopin' we won't be the losers by it."

"Losers—how?" asked Billy.

"Well, we sort o' feared you'd take Ezry away from Paw Paw an' we jest kain't 'ford to let him go. He's been one of us so long that, well, we're all sort o' clost friends, you see. If you take him away you'll come nigh breakin' several old fool hearts. You won't take him, will you?"

Billy Fox was visibly affected by Hezekiah's little speech.

"As long as my old dad has friends of this kind in Paw Paw I'll never take him away for good," he said. "I'm going to take him on a week's visit to-day, but—"

"You'll send him back?"

"Yes, sir. He'll be back in a week. I



## BOLIVAR BROWN

promise that this town shall be his home as long as he wants it to be."

"Billy Fox, yer a trump," said Hezekiah. "Blamed if I don't set 'em up to the seegars."

He brought out a box of smokes and passed them around. Uncle Ezra was called in and Billy and he took cigars.

"Uncle Ezry," said Hezekiah, "you've got a good son. God bless him!"

The old man and Billy went over to the bank and called on James Lake. After a short chat all three went to Uncle Ezra's office and at ten o'clock met the boys. Tim Walker was among them, seated in his wheeled chair.

"Boys," began Uncle Ezra, "they ain't no use delayin' matters. Mr. Lake an' me have received letters from the capitalist in St. Joe an' he wants to buy us out at once. They offer us six thousand dollars fer our rights. What do you say? Shall we take it?"

The boys twirled their hats and waited for Bolivar to speak.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"What do you think, Bol?" asked James Lake.

"I think if Mr. Barnes is treating us honest, we better sell."

"Exactly what I think," said Mr. Lake.

"All right, then," said Uncle Ezra. "Mr. Barnes has bought somethin'. Mr. Lake's bank will have eight hundred dollars to the credit of each of you next week."

Bolivar had been doing some mental calculating. "Hold on, Uncle Ezra!" he said. "You an' Mr. Lake ain't gettin' nothin' out of this."

"Me an' Mr. Lake don't want nothin' an' won't take nothin'," replied the old man. "You boys found the vein an' you get all the money exceptin' a little fer expenses."

"Naw!" came from Skeets.

"We insist!" said James Lake.

"Well, whatever we get, Uncle Ezra," said Bolivar, "we'll all have you an' Mr. Lake to thank fer it, an' we'll be mighty thankful."



## BOLIVAR BROWN

"Hush!" said the old man. "Next week we'll talk 'bout what you'd better do with your money."

"I know what I'll do with mine," said Tim Walker. "I'll go to Chicago and be treated. Oh, Uncle Ezry, I just can't thank you an' Mr. Lake enough, an' Bolivar, too, an'—"

"Hold on there, Tim!" said Bolivar. "You'll fall out o' that chair. Go ahead an' get yer treatment, an' when you come home we'll let you play first base on the ball team."

"Will you?" asked the cripple, his eyes sparkling with anticipation.

"You bet!"

Half an hour after the boys had left the office Uncle Ezra and Billy Fox were standing beside a grassy mound in the town's little cemetery.

"There's the place, Billy," said the old man, softly. "Mamalie's sleepin' below, prob'ly dreamin' of Billy Fox."

Billy Fox gazed downward in silence.



## BOLIVAR BROWN

As the two men strolled back down the main street, Uncle Ezra noticed a man and a woman walking along under the trees in earnest conversation.

"Why, how do you do, Miss Millie!" said the old man. "I'll see you next week, Mr. Lake."

James Lake smiled a smile of genuine happiness, while Millie Brewster bowed her head and touched her handkerchief to her eyes.

"By the way," asked Billy Fox, a moment later, "where's Bolivar? We ought to tell him good-by."

"There the rascal is," replied Uncle Ezra, pointing toward the Lake home. Billy Fox looked and saw Bolivar Brown, seated in the hammock, eating candy. By his side was Katie Lake.

"Huh!" chuckled Uncle Ezra. "Looks to me like I 'ain't got any corner on happiness to-day. Come on, Billy—le's ketch our train."

THE END















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